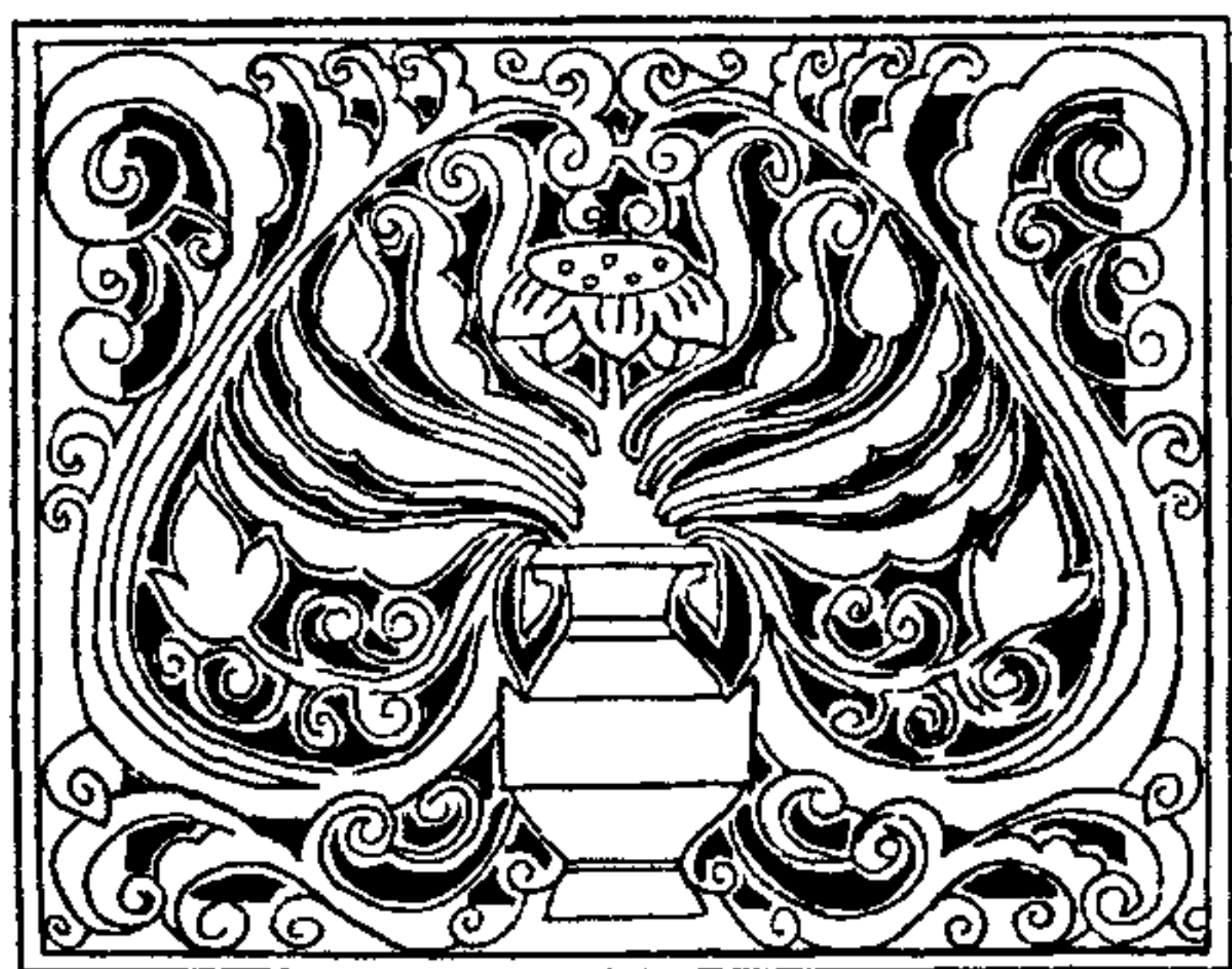




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896.

NOVEMBER 1998

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom 617

Fixing the Mind on God - X
(Editorial) 618

Mundaka Upanishad
Swami Sridharananda 620

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava
Prachar Parishad:
A Message: Late Revered Swami
Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj 624

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava
Prachar Parishad: A Report
Swami Sunirmalananda 626

Rejuvenation of Ramakrishna-
Vivekananda Bhava Prachar

Continued on the next page.

Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via : Lohaghat
Dt. Champawat 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898

245 2383

226 8000

Fax 245 0050

Email: advaita@giasc101.vsnl.net.in



Cover: Sri Ramakrishna Temple

Belur Math

Inset: Prayer Hall

Rates of Subscription *(inclusive of Postage)*

	Annual	3 Years	20 Years	Patron (25 Years)
India	Rs. 60	Rs. 170	Rs. 600	Rs. 1500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 180	Rs. 500	Rs. 2500	Rs. 5000
U.S.A. & Canada	U.S. \$ 20	\$ 60	\$ 300	\$ 600
Other Countries	U.K. £ 15	£ 45	£ 225	£ 500

Names of patron subscribers are published in *Prabuddha Bharata*.

...Organizational Aspects
Dr. B. T. Advani 636

The Ordeal of Love: Sister Nivedita's
 Struggles in America for the
 Education of Women in India
Drs. Mamta Ray and Anil Baran Ray... 639

Religion Minus Its Evils
Swami Shraddhananda 647

Ego: Ripe and Unripe
Swami Deshikatmananda 650

Bindu in the Upanisads
R. Ramaswamy 653

Universal Temple of Sri Ramakrishna
 at Dehradun
Swaraj Majumdar 656

Gita for Spiritual Practice
Dr. B. R. Phani Kumar 659

News and Reports 665

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

NOVEMBER 1998

No. 11

Divine Wisdom

SUNITI'S ADVICE TO DHRUVA

तथा मनुर्वो भगवान् पितामहो
यमेकमत्या पुरुदक्षिणैर्मुखैः।
इष्ट्वाभिपेदे दुरुवापमन्यतो भौमं
सुखं दिव्यमथापवर्ग्यम्॥

In the same way, your grand-father Swāyambhuva Manu attained to worldly felicity and the bliss of liberation, so difficult to obtain otherwise, by propitiating Sri Hari with *yajnas* accompanied by very liberal gifts.

तमेव वत्साश्रय भृत्यवत्सलं
मुमुक्षुभिर्मृग्यपदाब्जपद्धतिम्।
अनन्यभावे निजधर्मभाविते
मनस्यवस्थाप्य भजस्व पूरुषम्॥

Dear one! Install that all-pervading Being in your heart, being prepared by the

observance of Bhāgavata Dharma and by unswerving devotion, and worship Him who is fond of his servants and whose feet all liberation-seekers strive to attain.

नान्यं ततः पद्मपलाशलोचनाद्
दुःखच्छिदं ते मृगयामि कंचन।
यो मृग्यते हस्तगृहीतपद्मया
श्रियेतरेरङ्ग विमृग्यमाणया॥

Dear boy! I can think of none but that lotus-eyed Lord Mahavishnu to assuage your grief. For, His greatness is so transcendent that even Padmā (Śrī Devī), whose favour all the other Devas are courting, is ever engaged in service at His feet.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.8.21-3

Fixing the Mind on God - X

Is there just one way to fix the mind on God? If yes, it would require all to travel by the same route and such a position does not take care of variety in human nature. Each person has characteristics his own. So, the method one may adopt to fix the mind on God are one's own. That is why fixing the mind on God is an art, one's own, and one has to discover the method which is particularly suited to his temperament. Again, the same person may find that one method or the other is more suitable for him at some point of time. It being an urge to feel deeply within that one wants to revel in the thought of God and God alone, one chooses the method best for him depending on the time and circumstances.

In a broad sense there are four *yogas* — Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Raja, and these really stress the four faculties in man which class him into one of the four types: the active, the intellectual, the devotional or the emotional, and the meditative. One may adopt one or more of these four methods of uniting oneself with one's true nature. Swami Vivekananda said, that he was a true follower of Sri Ramakrishna who combined in himself all the four *yogas*. In all these methods the central theme is the same: to repeatedly visit the proximity of God, to correct the tendency of the mind to externalize by repeatedly bringing it inward. The *Pravṛtti* (outgoing tendency) is to be corrected by the *Nivṛtti* (ingoing tendency).

However, in the process we are not *creating* our internal divine nature; it is already there; we have merely forgotten it owing to ignorance which has brought into existence our ego and the world of duality. We repeatedly try to forget the falsity and to remember the truth, which to those more

advanced is either easily accomplished, or a matter in which the grounding is firm. The less advanced one is, the more often the straying to the external, the more often the snubs the world gives, and the more the resolution to go inward. Success is eventually ours, since one's nature is one's own, never to be lost; one has merely to uncover it.

Scriptures repeatedly tell us about our true nature, and about how we should function in this world. Yet, clothed in a maze of commentaries, the real message graspable even by the ordinary man is lost sight of. This month we shall cite just a few *ślokas* from the *Bhagavad-gītā* in illustration.

One's kinship to God in ever so many ways is quite evident from the *śloka*, *Gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇam suhṛt; Prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam nidhānam bījamavyayam*. (9.18) '(I am) the fruit of actions, the nourisher, the Lord, witness, abode, refuge, friend, origin, end, foundation, store and the imperishable seed.'

Mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva (7.7), 'All this is strung on Me (the Lord) like pearls on a string.' God is our inner core and we are united, each to the other, through this cord of Divine Love. But for the thread, the pearls would scatter; even so we land in chaos (as we are at present) if we distance ourselves from the Divine Core. That distancing is not possible really, but we may do so, as it were, on account of our ignorance. Then we deny our divine nature and come to grief. So, the prayer goes: may we not deny Brahman; may not Brahman deny me. When we deny Brahman, Brahman also denies us.

Sarvasya cāham hr̥di sanniviṣṭaḥ (15.15), 'I (the Lord) am seated in the hearts of all.' The

heart is the drawing room where God resides always. This divine presence in our hearts must be felt palpably and at all times.

Aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām dehamāśritaḥ... (15.14), 'Taking the form of Vaiśvānara (the digestive energy in beings) and residing in the bodies of creatures....' This is just one example of God's direct role in the digestion of food consumed by creatures. But then He performs every other act as well. *Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām lṛddeśe' rjuna tiṣṭhati; Bhīrāmayaṁ sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.* (18.61) 'O, Arjuna, the Lord resides in the region of the heart of all creatures, revolving through Māyā all the creatures (as though) mounted on a machine.'

It is therefore only proper that man, who is capable of thinking for himself, performs all actions with this understanding: *Yatkarōṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat; Yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam.* (9.27) 'O son of Kunti, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as a sacrifice, whatever you give, and whatever austerities you undertake, (all) that you offer to Me.' This position is only reasonable. The pen should never take the credit for the writing.

The idea of remembering God at all times is highlighted in many śloka. *Tadārtham karṇa kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara.* (3.9) 'Without being attached, O son of Kunti, you perform actions for Him (the Lord)' — either to please Him, or by offering the fruits of actions to Him, or as veritable worship to Him in His manifold forms. *Yato yato niścarati manaścañcalamasthiram; Tatastato niyamya itadātmanyeva vaśam nayet.* (6.26) '(The yogi) should bring the mind under the subjugation of the Self Itself, by restraining it from all those causes whatever due to which the restless, unsteady mind wanders away.' *Abhyāsa*, repeated practice, is stressed in this śloka. *Teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktirviśiṣyate; Priyo hi jñānīno'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyaḥ. Udārāḥ*

sarva eva ite jñānī tvātamaiva me matam; Āsthitāḥ sa hi yuktātmā mamevānuttamām gatim. (7.17, 18) 'Of them (the afflicted, the seeker of wealth, the seeker of Knowledge, and the man of Knowledge, who all adore the Lord), the man of Knowledge, endowed with constant steadfastness and one-pointed devotion excels. For I am very much dear to the man of Knowledge, and he too is dear to Me. All of these, indeed, are noble, but the man of Knowledge is the very Self. (This is) My opinion. For, with a steadfast mind, he is set on the path leading to Me alone who am the super-excellent Goal.' *Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru; Māmevaiśyasi yuktvaivamātmanāṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ.* (9.34) 'Have your mind fixed on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, and bow down to Me. By concentrating your mind and accepting Me as the supreme Goal, you shall surely attain Me who am thus the Self.' In a similarly worded śloka (18.65), Sri Krishna gives His solemn promise in this regard: *satyaṁ te pratijāne*, '(This) truth do I promise to you.' Thus, through any of the major four paths — Karma, Raja, Jnana and Bhakti — one can attain Him.

In śloka 18.66, Sri Krishna asks Arjuna, and through him all mankind, to take refuge in Him alone, *Māmekam śaraṇam vraja*. In his advent as Sri Ramakrishna, he asked Girish Ghosh to give him the 'power of attorney'. Girish thought that was an easy way — much easier than remembering God twice a day, or at least once a day, or before taking food, or at bedtime. But this apparently easy method, Girish soon learnt, required him to always turn to God for His guidance and directive, for, once he gave the power of attorney, he was to function entirely under God's will. 'I shall do, if Mother wills it so', became his language thereafter. Thus, surrender — 'Thy will be done' — is a very effective method and the supreme among all the methods of union with God. Indeed, total freedom consists in total surrender to the Eternally Free. □

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा
सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम्।
अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो
यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः॥

*Satyena labhyas-tapasā hy-eṣa ātmā
samyag-jñānena brahmacaryeṇa nityam;
Antaḥ-śarīre jyotir-mayo hi śubhro
yaṁ paśyanti yatayaḥ kṣīṇadoṣāḥ.*
(III.i.5)

This bright and pure soul (Atman), within the body, is obtainable by (practising) continuously truth, austerity, proper knowledge and a life of chastity. He It is, whom the ascetics, with their imperfections done away, behold.

The teacher wants to remove from our minds the idea that spiritual wisdom of the *Brahmavid-variṣṭha* is the exclusive experience of a class of people. This is an unnerving, weakening thought. There were many disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who reached that goal though they were not even ordained into sannyasa. The Upaniṣad also does not subscribe to the idea of a special class qualified for that goal and mentions the names of many *Brahmavādis*, *Brahmavādinis*, *yatis* and *ṛṣis*. Therefore, having mentioned the ultimate goal, the teacher now tells how each one, notwithstanding his present condition or status, can raise his level of consciousness to as high a level as he can. A person by merely hearing of It and desiring to reach It, can gain access to that goal. This is the only requirement—to learn about It and to desire to reach It—, and one's effort and progress are proportionate to the keen-

ness of one's desire.

From where we are today to where we have to reach, *variṣṭha*, is a great distance. The intermediate steps are the auxiliary disciplines (*sahakāri sādhanāni*) in the words of Śaṅkarācārya. These are the supporting means: certain disciplines to be observed, certain qualities and virtues to be cultivated within oneself, and to feel that one is progressing towards that goal which until now was felt to be unattainable. These lay a stable foundation on which spiritual achievement can be built. As there is a gradation in secular education and knowledge, even so there is gradation for spiritual achievements.

The teacher does not insist on creating an external atmosphere conducive for our evolution; we must create an atmosphere *within* ourselves to meet the challenges of life. There is a saying in Sanskrit that 'he is a fool who wants to bathe in the sea after the waves subside'.¹ He has no proper understanding of the situation, for the sea will never become calm. We should not hope that the world will one day be helpful, but know that it will always be against our efforts. We have no control over the affairs of the world, but we can control our interaction with it. So, our attitude should be self-control; we must control our responses to the external stimuli.

The disciplines of truth, austerity, proper knowledge and chastity mentioned in this *mantra* are to enable us to view the world around us objectively. We should not get enmeshed in the external stimuli because of our ego and its desires. We have to cultivate a detached spirit, a witness-like atti-

1. *Samudre śānta kallole snātum icchati durmatih.*

tude. Atman is reached only if these disciplines are continuously (*nitya*) practised.

The first discipline mentioned is truth. Be truthful always, for by telling lies you only deceive yourself. Cultivate the habit of speaking the truth: *yathārtha kathanam satyam*. It is a code of conduct and does not refer to the eternal Truth: in describing/reporting whatever you perceive through the five senses, be precise, correct and thorough, without the slightest deviation, exaggeration, or suppression. At present we are imprecise, faulty, erroneous, wrong in our description of situations, which creates a havoc within us and outside us. We must be exact in relating events precisely without addition and/or subtraction consequent on our likes and dislikes. To cultivate *satyam* will make Atman attainable. Such precision and perfection is an essential quality to penetrate the veil of ignorance. *Satya-kathanam* effectively checks the egotistic wavering of the mind to deviate from truth; this habit should be *nitya*, constant, without any interruption, at all times and not merely when it is convenient or to our benefit. Speaking only the truth without looking at the results is an uncompromising spirit of excellence and perfection which will keep the ego in its proper place. We are told to adhere to truth, but what about unpleasant truths? First know that the goal is reached through truth and next find out your capacity to absorb the wrath of the world consequent on adhering to truth. This idea is concretised in the form of Mahadeva, who swallowed the poison which would have otherwise burnt the world, and held it in His throat becoming *Nīlakaṇṭha Śiva*. He knew his inner strength, and could therefore consume the poison without losing His poise. Truthfulness has to be practised knowing that one has to pay the price; you alone can judge whether you have that capacity. In a story from the Upaniṣads, a person fleeing from his enemies sought refuge from a ṛṣi who hid him in a stack of hay. When the enemies came to

the ṛṣi and asked him about the person, he was in a fix. On the one hand he had to speak the truth, and on the other he had to protect the person who had sought refuge from him. So, he spoke nothing, and was tortured to death by the enemies. The point is that the ṛṣi chose to do his duty and was even prepared to lay down his life for upholding the principles of his life. The guiding principle is: '*satyam brūyāt, priyam brūyāt, mā brūyāt satyam-apriyam*, speak the truth, speak pleasantly, keep silent when, if you speak, it would have to be an unpleasant truth.'

Tapasyā means austerity and concentration — to generate heat — to burn away the dirt within oneself. It is a tremendous persistent effort to qualitatively improve oneself by eliminating all bad habits. The desire to know the unknown is not satiated till there is this untiring, uninterrupted, persevering effort to manifest the Divinity potentially within oneself. If you fail once, try again to burn your impurities as it were by fire, by *tapasyā*, to remove the mental dross and become adequately pure to reach the goal. Through such disciplines our energies are channelized in a proper direction.

Brahmacarya (continence in its widest sense) is of universal application; it means a total management of one's own resources, faculties and energies, to transcend the limited ego and pass into the domain of universal understanding and consciousness. Every person has certain faculties, which if channelized in a proper manner can make the study of the Upaniṣads fruitful. *Brahmaṇi carati yaḥ sa brahmacāri*: He who is always aware of the existence of Brahman within and without, and holds on to this thought and acts in its light is a *brahmacāri*. Every individual should be aware of his potential nature; he should then learn the technique of managing his energies in daily life. First know thyself as the manifestation of the Divine and then manage your intellect, emotion, will and organic mechanism to reach the unreachable, unknown Reality.

Sāmyag-jñāna is looking at things from a correct and unshakable perspective. Whether Atman has been realized or not, the fact is that the universe is the manifestation of the Divine. That Divinity is as much within us as in other objects characterized by *nāma-rūpa-artha-kriyā-kāritva* (name-form-utility-action-agency). Any deviation from this conviction will prove to be a stumbling block to progress.

Atman has to be seen within oneself first. Though man is an animal yet he has the special quality of *viveka* (discrimination) to analyse and evaluate himself *and* the world. Thus, we must utilize this unique quality to obtain a correct perspective and then go straight to the goal by managing our resources. One seeks God in a place of worship, but He really lives within oneself, *antah-śarīre*. This means that the journey to discover one's true original nature must not be outside but within oneself. Experience first the Self deep within yourself, for the external world is too big to be grasped. Our name, form, parentage, caste, status, nation and utility-action-agency (*artha-kriyā-kāritva*) satisfy us in our daily life. But this identification is only a false identification; it is not our true nature. We are not really this body-mind mechanism. We only reside here even as one resides in a house, *gehe iva dehe*. True identity is realized within through *Ātma-jñāna*. So, start the journey within, in meditative practice.

This Atman appears as *jyotir-maya* and *śubhra*, luminous and pure as the light of the sun. It removes the darkness in which our ignorance survives. When *Ātma-jñāna* arises, *sa sarvajñah sarvavit bhavati*, he becomes a knower of everything for he knows himself to be one with Brahman. The teacher highlights that by knowing oneself one becomes a knower of all. When illumination and joy fill us, the small ego — the 'I' which differentiates us from the world — disappears, and the heart is filled with the bliss of God. This is the real meaning of purity; the indi-

viduality, *aham*, is replaced by universality, Atman.

Sri Ramakrishna gives the example of the onion which is peeled, scale by scale, till ultimately we come to emptiness, nothingness, when the onion is totally peeled off. *Śubhra* is to gradually peel ourselves off our limitations, *nāham, nāham, nāham; tūhu, tūhu, tūhu*, not I, not I, not I; but You, You, You. I don't exist, only the One is reflecting in me who am merely the container. We see this in the example of the breaking one by one of the innumerable containers of water which reflect innumerable reflections of the sun; we finally look up when all the containers are broken and see only the sun.

To the student, Bhṛgu Vārūṇi, who sought *Brahmajñāna* from his father (vide *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*), the father, Varuṇa, gave the answer: *tapasā brahma vijijñāśasva*,² (know Brahman through austerity) because he knew that at that stage the student was not ready for the teaching, *tat tvam asi*. By *tapas* one becomes *kṣīṇadoṣa* (of reduced blemish) and moves nearer to the knowledge of Brahman. The student meditates and then replies, Brahman is *Annam* (matter), because all beings are born from matter, after birth they live by matter, and when departing they enter into matter. In every place, in and through various names and forms, matter is all-pervading. The teacher repeats his original command 'know Brahman through austerity'. So, after further meditation and introspection, the student becomes a little more free from blemish and says that the all-pervading Brahman is *Prāṇa* (energy). As he meditated further and his personality became more and more free from error and impurity, he was able to go deeper and deeper within himself; he dis-

2. *Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yat prayantya bhisamviśanti iti, tad vijijñāśasva, tad-brahmeti, sa tapo'tapyata* (III.i.1). *Tam hovāca, tapasā brahma vijijñāśasva, tapo brahmeti* (Bhṛgu-vallī, III.ii-v).

covered successively *Manas* (mind), *Buddhi* (intellect) and *Ānanda* (bliss) to be Brahman. When a student sheds all his limitations and is deep in concentration, he feels a deep sense of satisfaction and joy, and thinks that bliss is Brahman. By gradual stimulation of his own thinking and cleaning of his own understanding, he passes from the concept of matter as Brahman to the conclusion that Bliss is Brahman. This is the last stage in the realm of relativity. As yet the student is not merged in Brahman; he has only the feeling that Brahman is *Ānanda-svarūpa*. Sri Ramakrishna's analogy is most apt: As one comes nearer and nearer to the sea, first he feels the cool, soothing breeze, and his confidence increases; then he hears the sound of breakers on the shore. The sea is not yet seen. Coming nearer, one gets the first sight of the sea from afar. Coming still nearer, he touches the sea-water. Till he does that, the sea is not a concrete, tangible thing.

Similarly, when one arrives at the state of realization of Bliss as Brahman (*Ānandam brahma iti vyajānāt*), the final experience *ayam ātmā brahma* (this Atman is verily Brahman) has not yet arisen as the last barrier—ego—to this experience has not been broken. *Ānanda* is the stage of which Sri Ramakrishna says, 'I do not want to become sugar, I want to taste sugar'. The distinction between *Dvaitavāda* and *Advaitavāda* rests on this. The *Dvaitavādi Bhakta* likes to enjoy the love towards and attachment to his Beloved, but not to become one with It. The *Advaitavādin* wants to merge in Brahman, getting rid of his *Aham* (ego) and say, '*Aham brahmāsmi*'. Thus, there is the thinnest possible distinction between *Ānandam brahma-iti vyajānāt* and *Ayam ātmā brahma*. It can be removed if one can pull oneself out of the bliss of Brahman and cross over to *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* and experience *ayam ātmā brahma*. As the student has grown from *Annam* is Brahman to *Ānandam* is Brahman, he can also cross this state and come to the experience, 'I am Brahman'. This is the essence of

the teaching in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

This teaching of the *Taittirīya* is here indicated by the word *antah-śarīre*. It means to look within first, then outside. The fact is that sadness, joy, anger — all these inner conditions of the mind of a person — are mixed up in what he perceives outside; he cannot see the Essence of what exists outside. So what is the Self? Who am 'I'? I am not the body, life, etc., because these are all things which the Self possesses and therefore they are adjuncts to the 'I'. When this sort of meditation and introspection brings us to the state of *Saccidānanda*, one does not want to go beyond that Bliss. Breaking of this barrier to enter *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* thereby merging in Brahman depends on the *Sādhaka's* desire to do so and his level of identification with the body, life, etc. The *Sādhaka's* attainment will be measured by his level of consciousness and his answer to the question, '*Ko'ham, ko'ham?*, who am I, who am I?' The Self can be identified as a child of God, a friend or beloved of God — in five types of emotional moods — and that is the stand of the *Dvaitavādin*. A *Viśiṣṭhādvaitavādin* makes the Self *Samudrasya taraṅga*, a wave of the ocean, which cannot exist without the ocean though the ocean can exist without the waves. But the *Advaitavādin* equates the Self with Brahman.

Swami Vivekananda conceived of the idea of a universal religion from this teaching of the scriptures. One can stop at any stage and be happy. But if he is dissatisfied, he must press further on till that dissatisfaction disappears. One delimits oneself intellectually by studying and understanding the Upaniṣads. Along with this, he must delimit his emotions and volitions; he must not be attached to himself alone. For instance, in the *Grhasthāśrama* (stage of a householder), there is a compulsory delimitation of oneself — to think of others' needs before one's own from a sense of duty, responsibility, obligation towards other mem-

(Continued on page 625)

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishad:

A Message from Most Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj

Dear members of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishad,

I am very happy to meet you all on this very auspicious occasion, and to convey a few ideas to you.

First of all, Swami Vivekananda gave us a clear idea of the goal and also the path to the successful attainment of that goal. Swamiji believed in expansion. His oft-quoted saying is that all expansion is life and all contraction is death. He also said that expansion is the sign of life and we must spread over the world with our spiritual ideas. He wanted the work to extend not only throughout the length and breadth of this country but also, beyond the borders, to the whole world, because the entire world is in need of such ideas.

Swami Vivekananda knew that such expansion was not possible with a handful of monks and brahmacharins who constitute the Ramakrishna Sangha. So, he wanted that, to begin with, in this country, the spread of the message must be carried on by organizing centres in different regions. People will thereby be influenced by ideas and they in turn will carry on the work with dedication. Therefore, what is necessary is that the work of expansion must be taken over by people who are like-minded and who are capable of assimilating and disseminating ideas throughout the world. This work of expansion must not be confined to individuals; by starting organizations with similar ideology, we have to spread spiritual ideas far and wide.

This is where the Bhāva Prachār Parishad comes in. The Parishad must not be confined to the institutions or organizations under the banner of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda alone. This Prachar work (spreading the message) must go on, beyond all limits; we must carry the message throughout the world.

We are seeing how things are already moving fast. They will go on doing so, till the entire world will be covered, because Sri Ramakrishna came not only for any one country in particular, but for the world at large.

To carry on this work of spreading the message, what is necessary is that we must work in an organized way. Swamiji gave much emphasis on the power of organization. Organized functioning is absolutely necessary to carry on the work effectively and with loyalty to the ideas of Ramakrishna. Secondly, Swamiji knew what the problems were at that time. These problems are still there more or less. Many more may crop up in future. We have to tackle these in the spirit of Swamiji following the practical method shown by him. All problems can be solved in the light of the life and teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda emphasized that the leaders who are working to disseminate the message will have to be unselfish, and do the work out of love for the ideals, love for the country, and love for the world at large. The ideas have to be carried on by people who are unselfish and who work with the conviction of doing good to the world in the sense in which Sri Ramakrishna wanted it done. Doing good to the world does not mean that we work with the ego that *we* are doing it. On the contrary, we

* Delivered on 5 June 1998 at the Vivekananda Sabha Griha (Auditorium opposite the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira of Saradapitha).

must work with the faith that we are mere instruments in the hands of Sri Ramakrishna and also with the purpose of serving a world organization.

During these two days of the Bhāva Prachār Parishad Convention, I think the details will be worked out by the members who will discuss matters concerning the mode of work and so on. I hope that they will try to point out the problems and also find solutions to them. Our work will be effective only when we remember that our goal is the dedicated service of humanity at

large, considering everyone as the veritable manifestation of God.

I pray to Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji to give us the strength so that we can remain loyal to the ideal. I also pray to them to give us the strength to continue the work uninterruptedly and to grant us the light to see how we can achieve the goal set by them before us. We hope that through their grace we will be effective instruments in accomplishing their work.

Thank you.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

(Continued from page 623)

bers of the family; one's own interest comes last. By this method of self-denial, one can slowly expand the self to include friends, community, nation, and the whole world by an intellectual, emotional and volitional extension. Swami Vivekananda told Sister Nivedita to look upon the heart as the centre of a circle and to extend the diameter to infinity; that is *Mukti*. Here the teacher teaches the student to serve humanity as a manifestation of the Divine. Intellectual conviction (*Sāmyag-jñāna*), emotional attachment, and volitional action (*Kriyāvān*) will then coincide. All this happens *antaḥ-śarīre*; it is a subjective effort at spiritual growth, till the 'I' no longer exists; He, who also exists in innumerable other forms, alone exists.

The *Yati* is a *sannyasi*, literally a person who has control over his faculties, a *Sāmyata puruṣa*. A mirror covered with dust does not reflect an image. So we begin to wipe it clean, and slowly the accumulated dirt gets removed. Our forgetfulness of the existence of the mirror (because it was not reflecting light) disappears as the glass becomes bright and brilliant and its reflectivity increases. This symbolizes the making of the mirror of the *Antaḥ-karaṇa* (inner instrument, mind)

free from fault; the fault was the layer of the dust of desires and the six enemies of man. Through efforts — *satya, tapas, sāmyag-jñāna* and *brahmacarya* — we remove the stain and scum of undesirable things from within us, till at last reflectivity comes back to ninety-nine per cent. Even if a slight dirt remains, one can still see glimpses of one's true face. The *Yati* makes a continuous effort to remove the last trace of dirt from his consciousness by following these auxiliary disciplines, becomes free from all faults and sense of limited personality, and becomes aware of the bright and pure Self. Sri Ramakrishna says that just before emancipation, the person is like a lamp with a very thin glass as the separation; the person is like the mirror with almost no dirt on it, and the last trace of dirt too will totally disappear when the *Jīva* merges in Brahman.

(to be continued)

A grain of Truth will cover a whole world of delusion. Get up, be strong, and realize the Truth. This is the greatest life.

—Swami Turiyananda

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda

Bhāva Prachār Parishad Convention: A Report

SWAMI SUNIRMALANANDA

The Ramakrishna Movement

The Ramakrishna Movement consists not only of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, but also of the admirers and devotees of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, who form an important part of it. By 'Ramakrishna Movement' is meant the new way of life that was initiated by Sri Ramakrishna. This way of life is a God-centred life — the spiritual life. Here, the goal of human life is only one: *seeing God*. The world is not something to be disregarded. On the contrary, it should be considered as the manifestation of God. People around are not mere human beings; they are God Himself, disguised in various forms. So, worshipping God who is present everywhere in order to see God is the new movement.

The spreading broadcast of this message of Ramakrishna is not an easy task. Considering the enormity of the task and the very few monks that the Ramakrishna Order has, it is practically impossible to take the message to every town and village. There is, however, an ever-increasing demand from everywhere to open branches of the Ramakrishna Mission and also to send monks. Under the present circumstances, it is not possible for the Mission to cope up with this demand.

The Bhāva Prachār Parishad

What is the way out then? The way out is through the admirers alone. During the last 50–60 years, there has been a proliferation of ashramas and centres based on the life and message of Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda in almost every town in India, and many places in the world. For any

movement to be strong and united, there must be certain common elements that govern all activities. Even though hundreds of Ramakrishna ashramas and centres are there in and around India, they all worked independently then, and consequently, there were huge variations in their style of functioning.

After the second general Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in 1980, it was seriously felt that these ashramas should be brought under some authority. Thus, the Bhāva Prachār Parishad (for short, Parishad) came into existence in the early 1980's. Bhāva can be translated as 'ideas and ideals'. Prachār is 'dissemination'. Parishad is 'an association'. Thus, the Parishad means 'an association for the dissemination of the ideas and ideals' of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Within fifteen years of its inception, the Parishad grew sufficiently. What began with just one Parishad is now fifteen. Each Parishad has been given a ten-point guideline by the Ramakrishna Mission. Only those ashramas which follow these guidelines can become members of the Parishad. Today, there are 458 member-ashramas all over India.

The Convention

A two-day Convention of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishad was held at Belur Math, as part of the on-going Centenary Celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission. On 5 and 6 June 1998, about 600 delegates from all over India were participating in this first-ever major Convention of the Parishad. The weather being hot and humid, it was a bit difficult for the delegates from cooler parts of India to adjust

to the climate. However, the authorities had made proper arrangements for the stay and board of the delegates so that they may feel comfortable.

5 June 1998

At the recently built Vivekananda Sabha Griha (Auditorium opposite the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira of Saradapitha), the first session began at 8:30 a.m. on 5 June with invocation. **Swami Smananandaji**, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, welcomed the gathering with a word of apology for having no other way but to call the Convention at such a time. He said that as a corollary to the 1980 Convention, the Parishad came into existence, and hundreds of centres, managed by devotees, were affiliated to the Parishad. He further said, that there has been a lot of demand all over the country to open centres of the Ramakrishna Order, but due to constraint of man-power it was not possible to do so. At the same time, it is imperative to spread the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda message. So, it is heartening that devotees start centres and run these on the same lines. The Parishad idea was mooted to bring all such centres together. The Swami further gave details about the Parishads at work and also mentioned the subjects to be dealt with in the two-day Convention. He concluded by expressing hope that the delegates will go back and continue the work with their 'whole hearts, heads and hands'.

The next item was benediction by **Sri-mat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj**, President of the Ramakrishna Order. Revered Maharaj said that Swami Vivekananda gave a clear indication of the goal and the path to the successful attainment of the goal. He believed in expansion and said that 'expansion is life and contraction is death'. Swamiji wanted the expansion of work throughout the length and breadth not only of our country but of the whole world. Swamiji also knew that such an expansion

was not possible with a handful of monks and brahmacharins. Thus, like-minded people should take up the work everywhere in the world. Revered Maharaj however cautioned that to do such work, what is needed is that we work in an organized way. Secondly, doing good does not mean that one must work with the ego that he or she is the doer. All are merely instruments in the hands of God, we must remember.

One of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order, **Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj**, spoke next. He focussed on the central idea of the Parishad. Revered Maharaj said that the most important purpose of the Parishad is to help the private Ashramas strengthen their common bond with Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order. 'By private Ashramas we mean centres functioning in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi or Swamiji, which are not branches of Belur Math. These non-affiliated Ashramas or non-official centres following the ideal of the Holy Trio are mostly run by householder disciples and admirers of Sri Ramakrishna.'

Swami Gahananandaji went on to elucidate the contribution of householder devotees for the cause of the Ramakrishna Movement. He quoted Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order: 'I appeal to all the followers of Sri Ramakrishna to take to the re-building of the nation vigorously both individually and by organizing more institutions like these in various parts of the country, for the work done by the monastics, though much in itself, is yet very little indeed, compared to the needs of the country.' Swami Gahananandaji commented that Swami Vireswaranandaji's interpretation that a person sincerely following the teachings of the Holy Trio is a member of the Sangha (Order) has broadened the scope of the Movement. Gahananandaji exhorted every member associated with the Parishad

to lead a spiritual life, which has two aspects: first, to follow the spiritual disciplines like, japa, meditation and so on, and second, to try to serve others through welfare activities. People will judge the Ramakrishna Movement by seeing the devotees. So, the devotees must be careful and should sincerely try to live up to the ideal, he said. Maharaj further added that if devotees lead such lives, gradually a new society may come into existence. Gahananandaji next quoted from Swami Premeshanandaji's letters: 'O devotees of the Lord, display exemplary lives, desiring nothing else but the love for the Lord. Usher into the world a new age, in which people will learn to love the Lord and find peace and strength in Him. Let your deeds speak.'

The session came to an end with the rendering of vote of thanks by **Swami Tattwabodhanandaji**. The closing song was sung by **Swami Sarvagananda**.

*How to Transform the Work of
Ramakrishna-Vivekananda
Bhāva Prachār Parishads into
the Ramakrishna Movement,
Dedicated to Nation-building*

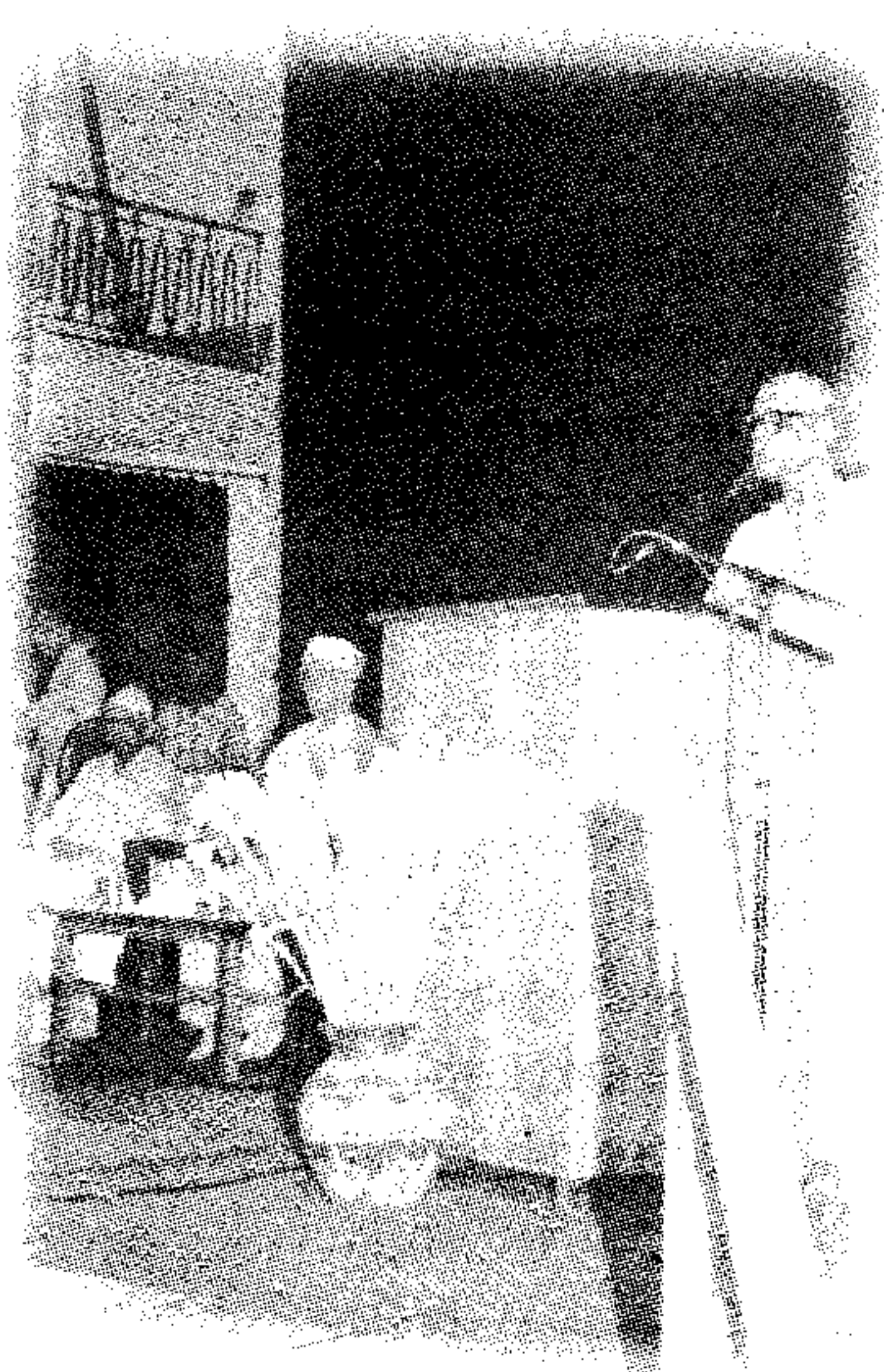
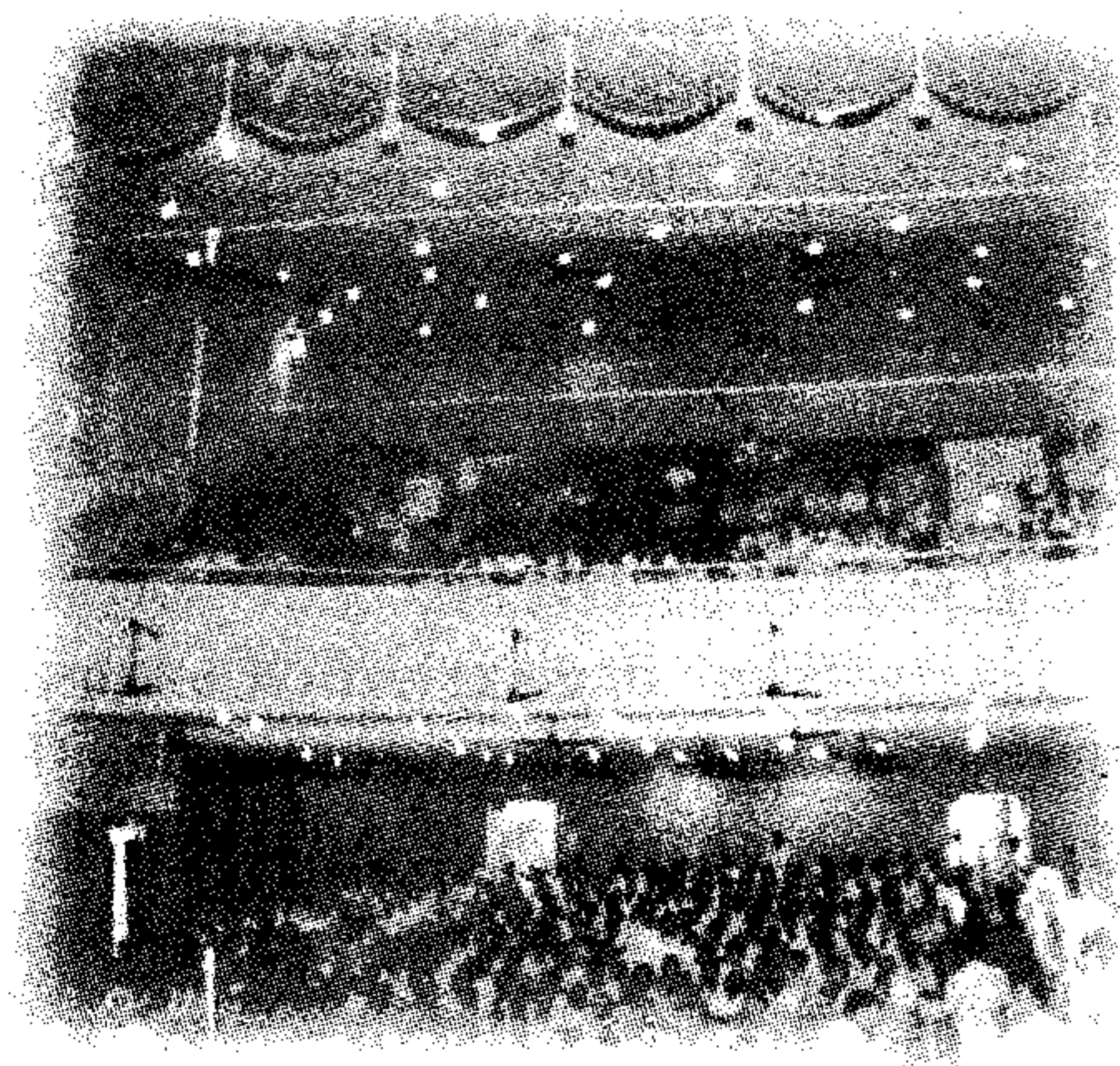
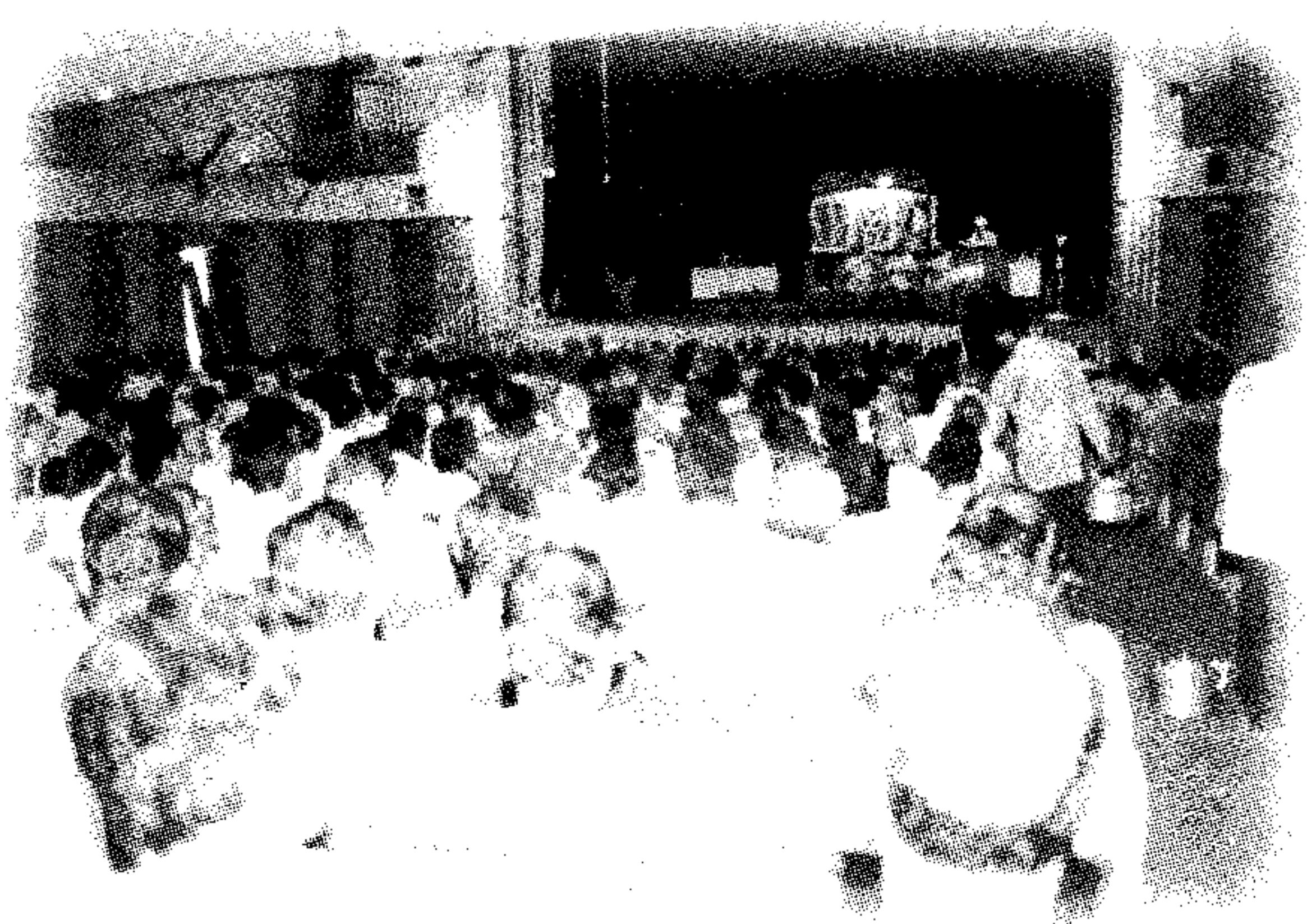
After a short tea break, the second session began. The theme of the second session was, 'How to Transform the Work of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishads into the Ramakrishna Movement, Dedicated to Nation-building.' **Swami Prameyanandaji**, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math was in the Chair.

Swami Shivamayanandaji, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, and the Convener of the Parishad, introduced the subject. 'There has been the thought of holding such a Convention since long. Something or the other stood in the way. Now, the Ramakrishna Mission's Centenary has given us the occasion. We are happy to have you all here,' he said. Shivamayanandaji reminded that on 19 November 1989, a smaller Convention was held; conveners and joint-conveners of the Parishad were present.

Then there were only 249 centres attached to 9 Parishads. Now there are 15 Parishads, and 458 centres, he added. Shivamayanandaji went on, 'We belong to the large and lively Movement of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. During such Conventions each member-ashrama will get to feel that they are not fighting a lone battle; they will find that they have friends all over, fighting similar battles.' Shivamayanandaji said that without proper organization nothing great can be achieved. He called upon the speakers who were to follow him to specifically mention problems they are facing in running their institutions so that solutions may be found.

Next, fifteen conveners of the Parishads gave their reports in brief. Of all the Parishads, that of Midnapore District is the latest. Though it is beyond this report to lay down all that was said by the fifteen conveners, we mention some: The Andhra Pradesh convener said that there is a centre under it run by fishermen and about 1000 of them are initiated into spiritual life. The Bankura convener said that there are already 66 centres under it. The Madhya Pradesh convener said that 8000 students derived benefit from their work.

Swami Prameyanandaji, the Chairman, spoke next. He said: 'Compared to what is needed, our work is not enough. We have a long way to go. Welfare activities should be given more importance and stress, than building temples. More and more youth should be attracted to the Movement. Swami Vivekananda had said that the chief bond of all activity is a common ideal. He thought about the ideal which is most suited for the age and gave it to us. Now, it is for us to put this ideal into practice. Our binding force is this common ideal. With that, we shall surely succeed. Not only that; our country will also be benefited.' After Swami Prameyanandaji's speech, the delegates dispersed for lunch and a brief rest.



*Rejuvenation of the Parishads and
Their Activities,
Emphasizing the Organizational Aspect*

The subject for the post-lunch session was: 'Rejuvenation of the Parishads and Their Activities, Emphasizing the Organizational Aspect'. The Chairman of the session was **Swami Prabhanandaji**, a senior Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math.

The session began with the opening song by **Swami Narendrananda**. There were several speakers who dealt with the many problems and the equally many solutions. For brevity we present the main ideas:

1. A coordination committee must be constituted which must visit member-ashramas every six months and assess the functioning.
2. Conveners should visit member-ashramas personally.
3. We must have a clear conception of the short and long range goals, which again depend on the time, place and circumstances. Based on this knowledge alone a programme of action can be decided upon.
4. Each member-ashrama must undertake to conduct the programme chalked out for/by it.
5. Local festivities should be celebrated. This will help to keep in check cultural aggression owing to globalization.
6. Every six months, each member-ashrama should submit report of its activities.
7. Audited accounts must regularly be submitted to the Parishad, and, if any irregularity is noticed, it must be brought to the attention of the member-ashrama concerned. There must be a strict watch over financial matters, and monetary considerations should not be there for becoming a member.
8. An English bulletin should be started which will help share the experiences of other member-ashramas and Parishads.
9. To participate in conferences, each

member-ashrama should send representatives who are well acquainted with the work conducted by it.

10. Every attempt should be made to enhance strength through promotion of unity. Pen-friendship amongst members and development of tourism were suggested as two possible means to achieve unity. But real unity comes from the perception of the Self and from owing allegiance to the Holy Trio.
11. There is no substitute to hard work — this must be ingrained in the minds of each member.
12. The work of each organization can uplift the performer only if it is done as a yoga, as a service to God in man.
13. Workers, especially the youth, need training. There is as always a crisis in character. It is through mistakes that we reach a state beyond all mistakes. The way to success lies through a thousand stumbles. So, without giving way to dejection one should strive for all-round perfection. No spiritual progress is possible without moral perfection. And truly ethics itself is based on spiritual vision. In the beginning, therefore, one must stress on both spiritual practice and moral perfection. Thus, spiritual practice and the study of Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature comes to one's rescue. Such literature must reach public libraries. There could also be subsidized editions brought out from time to time.
14. Certificates may be issued to members of the Parishad.
15. The man of realization never makes a false step. He needs no rules. Everyone else needs some sort of rules to guide him/her. But these rules are to be out-grown gradually. Ultimately rules are no more a binding, our way of life always conforming to them automatically.
16. Since monks cannot be spared always, *vānaprasthis* may be encouraged to

live in the member-ashramas; their way of life may inspire devotees.

17. Parishads have been an inspiration for many to become monastics. Therefore, just as various works are allotted to the monks and brahmacharins of the Ramakrishna Order, resourceful among these monastics may be identified, trained in the art, and allotted to supervising the work of the Parishads and the member-ashramas.
18. Good work is done by the Parishads and the member-ashramas but a little visibility is needed and one need not be publicity shy.
19. To meet the financial needs, devotees may donate one per cent of their income towards Mission activities.
20. Conventions such as the present one need to be held once every five years.

The Chairman of the session, **Swami Prabhanandaji**, uttered a few words in appreciation of the efforts made for holding this Convention. The Swami held that the Parishad is one of the strengths of the Ramakrishna Movement. Even as early as in the first meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission Association there were more householders than there were monks. Reflecting on Sri Ramakrishna's life, Swami Prabhanandaji said that the Master had several revelations. Of these, one was that he was to create a community given to the liberal ideas for which he himself lived. Since 1879–1881 Sri Ramakrishna was organizing the devotees into a group. A number of centres were started in the houses of his devotees. Later, monks and laity joined hands to form the Ramakrishna Mission Association.

About the Parishad, Prabhanandaji said that it should be given an organizational aspect. The Swami felt that when all is said and done, the truth about the member-ashramas is what it really is: 'the picture is not very rosy'. Quoting from Swami Vivekananda's letters to Swami Akhandanandaji, which read: '...our nation is lacking

in the faculty of organization. It is this one drawback which produces all sorts of evil', Prabhanandaji said that obedience is lacking. The volunteers become 'free' workers, and not obedient followers of orders. Quoting Swami Vireswaranandaji, who had wished to see Tripura transform into a Ramakrishna Rajya, the speaker hoped that the Parishads will bring about a new empire in the world. Initially, the Ramakrishna Mission authorities were not much enthusiastic about the Parishad, but slowly, the picture has changed. However, a lot of improvement is still needed in the functioning of both the member-ashramas and the Parishads themselves. There must be a humane relationship between the Parishads and member-ashramas, and not authoritarian rule. Big conventions will not help much; these will not go to help member-ashramas greatly. Prabhanandaji concluded his talk by pointing out that the worship of Sri Ramakrishna should be done more carefully in the member-ashramas.

Thus came to an end the deliberations of the first day. The evening saw an hour's cultural programme.

6 June 1998

Ramakrishna Movement: Its role in Nation-building

The second day's discussions began at 8:30 a.m. on 6 June. After a devotional song, the keynote address was delivered by **Swami Prabhanandaji**. Citing history Prabhanandaji said that the movement initiated by Sri Ramakrishna is a very important component in today's history. The subject 'Ramakrishna Movement: Its role in Nation-building' needs a closer scrutiny in the modern context. The 'nation' concept became popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. What is a nation? A large community, sharing a common notion, set for the glorification of a common tradition and with the capacity to create a self-sufficient economy and political institution, based on popular support, is a nation. This is the materialistic interpreta-

tion. One day, Swamiji commented before Nivedita and others: 'In order to become a nation, it appears that they need a common hate as well as a common love.'

Prabhanandaji next talked about the recent developments in our sub-continent. Swamiji wanted us to be apolitical, the speaker pointed. When asked what was the special characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, Vivekananda had replied: universality and positive approach. A number of historians have said that Swamiji did not initiate political nationalism; rather, it was spiritual nationalism that he initiated. The speaker quoted Sri Panikkar: 'The creation of a sense of community among Hindus of which the credit should to a very large extent go to Swami Vivekananda....' Prabhanandaji highlighted the three things which Swamiji said would make every nation and individual great: faith in the powers of goodness, absence of jealousy and suspicion, and to be as well as to do good.

Coming to the educational system, Prabhanandaji said that Macaulay's system was faulty. Ramakrishna Movement can do a lot in this area where character-building should be thoroughly stressed; value education should be stressed. In conclusion Prabhanandaji gave some four or five guidelines for the improved functioning of Parishads, in which stress was laid on managing youth power, continuity of working members, and bringing together of member-ashramas and Parishads.

Swami Satyarupanandaji, the Head of the Raipur Centre, said that Swami Vivekananda was the first person to understand India. Having studied all that the contemporaries had done, he dived into the soul of India. There, he found that the cause of India's downfall was the giving up of the spiritual ideal. He called upon Indians to consider Mother India as a Goddess. The leaders of those days accepted him. All those great leaders who fought for the nation's freedom were essentially spiritual. So, for

nation-building to be effective, the only way out is to train individuals as men of character.

Swami Bhajananandaji, one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Ramakrishna Mission, said that Swami Vivekananda has given us a four-point programme for nation-building: (1) re-vitalization of spiritual culture of the nation, (2) uplift of the downtrodden masses by giving them a message of strength and self-confidence, (3) spreading secular knowledge, and (4) a strong organization as the machinery for the dissemination of ideas.

According to Swami Vivekananda, every nation has a life-centre. India's life-centre is spirituality, and the rebuilding of the nation should be done by vitalizing its spiritual culture. Swami Bhajananandaji said that the neglect of this process has done enormous harm to the nation. The Ramakrishna Mission centres and the various private ashramas have done splendid work in remedying this damage. Continuing, he said that the Ramakrishna Movement has also succeeded in carrying out to a great extent two other points in Swamiji's programme, namely, spreading secular education and the operation of a well-organized machinery for the dissemination of ideas. The one point which has not received proper attention is Swamiji's idea that self-confidence and strength can be infused in the minds of downtrodden people like fishermen and cobblers by teaching them about their real nature as the Atman which is the central message of Vedanta. In this connection he spoke about Simone Weil, the Jewish thinker and mystic, who taught Vedanta to peasant women in southern France in the 1930's.

Other speakers too highlighted the need to focus on self-realization through selfless work, and on adhering to spiritual ideals without being carried away by the glamour of material and technological progress.

Swami Smarananandaji, Chairman of the session, said that in the world context, ours is a small movement, but considering the enormous work that is being done, it is quite big. Speaking about nation-building, the speaker referred to what Swamiji had said — that if India dies, the world will not survive — in a higher sense. To preserve the higher values in life, India's survival is a must. Speaking about education, the speaker said value education and secular education are poles apart. Swamiji wanted character-building and man-making education. After fifty years of independence, India has not brought home even secular education to the masses. So, if the country is to progress, those at the helm of affairs should understand the basic principles of character-building and man-making. Most of our problems today, he said, are because of lack of character-building education.

Importance of Shrines and Proliferation of Temples

The second session was on the 'Importance of Shrines and Proliferation of Temples'. **Swami Tattwabodhanandaji**, a senior Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math, was in the Chair.

Swami Suviranandaji, the Head of the Deoghar Centre, said that it was the shrine that gave the basic atmosphere for *sadhana*. Referring to the fourth visit of Mahendranath Gupta to Sri Ramakrishna, Suviranandaji said that if there is the grace of the Master, one can find the gates to heaven open. He referred to Holy Mother's praising the monks for their ability to dress vegetables well; indeed, if one can meditate well, one can work well too. There are many temples no doubt, but without proper effort to maintain their sanctity, they become redundant.

Swami Girishanandaji of Asansol observed that without observing the proper ritualistic norms, temples cannot be of use. Instead of this, he suggested, one can maintain more easily a simple shrine with floral decorations. There can be occasional, or at best fortnightly, worship. All the remaining energy can then be devoted to welfare activi-

ties in the spirit of worship.

Sri Harilal Poddar of Tripura Parishad too held that what is essential to building of temples is earnestness. Every member should worship God in human beings, he felt. To organize the local youth force for the well-being of the society is a far greater work, he considered.

The Chairman, **Swami Tattwabodhanandaji**, was of the firm opinion that there should be temples. As Hindus, our lives are centred around temples. Secondly, temples are not mere places of worship; they are centres of our culture and tradition. Thirdly, people come to temples for *satsanga*. Speaking from personal contact with senior monks, Swami Tattwabodhanandaji said that there are two types of meditation: *rūpa* (form) dhyana and *guṇa* (qualities) dhyana. Sri Ramakrishna's ideal was one of positive approach. He came for the establishment of *dharma*. His life too was centred around temples. So, to meditate on his form and to hear about his qualities, one goes to a temple. Of course, there are problems with regard to maintenance. So, in Andhra Pradesh, the Parishad planned to worship Sri Ramakrishna in his photograph and not in his image. But then, through temples alone can one gain the necessary feeling for others, the Swami emphatically pronounced.

Service in the True Spirit

The next subject of the morning session was 'Service in the True Spirit'. **Swami Shashankanandaji** of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi, said that in the religion of service, even a little done to the other will bring great good. If service is not done with humility or as worship of God, however, it goes in vain. Great love for the *jiva* was behind Sri Ramakrishna's initiating service activities; he himself served the poor at Deoghar. Speaking along the same lines, **Swami Nikhilatmanandaji** of Allahabad said that Sri Ramakrishna rebuked Narendranath for his desire to be immersed in *samadhi* always. He wanted his Narendra to

be like a huge banyan tree, providing shelter to millions. Nikhilatmanandaji further quoted three *slokas* from the *Bhagavata* and said that there are three types of devotees. Of them, he who sees God in all beings and worships Him there, is alone the best type of devotee. **Swami Srikanandaji**, one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Ramakrishna Mission, gave a beautiful talk on the ancient and modern approaches to the path of *seva*. Considering the four goals of life — *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, as also the four stages of life — *brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, Srikanandaji wonderfully showed how Swamiji's path of service is superior to the karma of *Mīmāṃsakas*. What has this service to do with member-ashramas? The ashrama will inspire its members to conduct service activities in a spirit of worship. **Swami Ramanandaji**, the Chairman of the session, summarized the words of the previous speakers and said that the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna are infinite in scope and dimension. All the utterances of Sri Ramakrishna, though he constantly lived in the thought of God, was for the good of humanity. Thus, though our aim is to be immersed in the thought of God, we should serve Him through all beings. Stressing the ideal of service, Swami Ramanandaji read a part of the Bengali book, *Saranagati O Seva*, and translated that portion into English for the benefit of the audience.

*Parishad's Role as Supplement to the
Ramakrishna Movement*

This was the sixth session of the Convention and the third for the day. The theme for discussion was 'Parishad's Role as Supplement to the Ramakrishna Movement'. After a beautiful rendering by **Swami Animeshananda** of one of Swamiji's compositions, **Swami Shivamayanandaji** delivered the keynote address: Sri Ramakrishna was a great organizer. He intelligently inducted the Holy Mother and Swamiji into the Ramakrishna Movement. Swami Shivamayanandaji therefore commented that it was

Sri Ramakrishna himself, who started the Ramakrishna Mission and not Swamiji. It was the love of Sri Ramakrishna for humanity that made him bring forth the Ramakrishna Mission. That love is still there. Shivamayanandaji further went on to say that without a proper attitude in the Parishad ashramas, no good can be done to the country. There is no doubt about the necessity of temples, he said. But we must concentrate more on the socio-economic situation. It is here that we can translate the ideal *Śiva jñāne jīva sevā* into practice. One more important thing is to stress on the building up of the character of young people at a time when there is erosion of character everywhere. If the Parishad works in the right spirit, it will be helping the Ramakrishna Movement in spreading the message of Ramakrishna. **Swami Swatmanandaji** of Rajahmundry preferred the word 'support' to 'supplement'. He said that the devotees have all along been the 'support' of the Movement. He also highlighted some of the welfare activities, some very moving, that are going on in Andhra Pradesh. **Swami Hitakamanandaji** of Manasadwip stressed the need for work among the youth. He wanted devotees to come forward and help the Mission during times of calamities of various kinds.

One of the Assistant Secretaries of the Ramakrishna Mission, **Swami Suhitanandaji**, said that he had the opportunity of listening to a famous Indian historian who, in the course of his talk, had commented that the peculiar thing about the Ramakrishna Mission is that it begins in a humble way but always ends up in a huge way. What began in a small way is now a huge affair. There was a time when small ashramas were struggling alone; coming here, they feel that they are not lonely travellers. The dimensions of the Ramakrishna Mission too have changed. Being monks, we have some problems: we cannot go to spread the message everywhere. The private ashramas have helped us a lot in this regard. To spread noble ideas

among those who do not know higher ideas is the task of the Parishad.

Sri Karve of the Maharashtra Parishad accepted that the Parishad on its own can do great work by collecting together all the member-ashramas. The Parishad can do much work in spreading the ideas and ideals of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda among both students and teachers, he asserted. **Sri Upendranath Dash** of Orissa Parishad held that spirituality is the backbone of India and that the Parishads too are spiritual organizations. He believed that the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature should reach many more homes.

Swami Vagishanandaji of Mumbai, one of the senior Trustees, was the Chairman. He stressed the points essential for an ideal life: the ideal of life, about changing oneself before looking upon others as bad, about loving everyone as one's own, etc. He wanted the Parishads to become broad and all-encompassing.

Concluding Session

Swami Lokeswaranandaji chaired the concluding session which began at 7:30 p.m. **Sri Subimal Chatterjee** of the Madhya Pradesh Parishad said: (1) The Ramakrishna Mission is not a narrow, sectarian movement; it is catholic. It is a movement for the regeneration of the whole world. (2) The Ramakrishna Movement symbolizes national reconstruction basing on the fundamental principles of Vedanta, scientific know-how, and organizational power of the West. (3) We see dilemma now because there are many problems. (4) Social service is not to be a hobby; it is a serious undertaking, a way of life. (5) To be successful, we have to ponder about the problems and their solutions deeply. This will help us to work better.

Sri Bijay Bhattacharya of Uttar Purvanchal Parishad said that the Parishad gained much experience and know-how

from this Convention. **Swami Sumedhanandaji** of Agartala said that during the last few years, being associated with the Parishad, he saw that it was Sri Ramakrishna himself who did his work. He called upon everyone to work unitedly under all circumstances so that great things may be achieved.

Swami Shivamayanandaji, the Convener of the Parishad, answered the questions that were raised during the two-day Convention: He said that directives should not be sent by authorities through circular as that is against the feeling of brotherhood. Monastic help must be sought to solve problems. The proposal of a common journal was not workable. The idea that monks must be spared for Parishad work is good; but the work the Parishads are doing is far greater.

Swami Lokeswaranandaji, in his Chairman's address spelled out some priorities in the rural work for the Parishads: (1) Providing drinking water in villages, (2) Eradication of illiteracy, (3) Work for women, (4) Removal of unemployment, (5) Controlling population growth. In these areas, he said, the Parishads can do concrete work. Though these appear to be mundane items, Lokeswaranandaji felt that these are needed since religion cannot be given to those with empty stomachs. The Parishads are in a better position to carry on with such activity than the Ramakrishna Mission, he felt.

The vote of thanks was tendered by **Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj**, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He conveyed his thanks to everyone and called upon the Parishads to exert more and more for the betterment of society. He wanted the Parishads to create a voluntary task force rooted in organized methods of work.

The two-day Convention came to an end with all the delegates singing the inspiring song, *Ramakrishna Sharanam*. □

Rejuvenation of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishads and Their Activities With Reference to Their Organizational Aspects

DR. B.T. ADVANI

Dr. B.T. Advani spoke on the first day of the Convention of the Bhāva Prachār Parishads held on 5th and 6th June 1998, at Belur Math. He is the General Secretary of Shri Ramakrishna Samskriti Peeth, Kamptee, Nagpur, and Convener of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhāva Prachār Parishad of Vidarbha and Marathwada.

This discussion about rejuvenation of Parishads underlines the need for the member-ashramas to organize themselves and their activities efficiently and effectively, to conform to the high standard of performance set by the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission centres on the one hand and to contribute towards nation-building on the other hand. The Ramakrishna Movement was the fore-runner of India's political freedom. It must now lead the nation to socio-economic and political freedom as well. The Math and Mission centres are limited in number. There is a clamour for more centres. Their work is much appreciated, but there is paucity of manpower. This situation sets a crucial role for the Parishads.

Parishads are the householders' wing of the Ramakrishna Movement. Sri Ramakrishna himself set a glorious tradition for the householders to be effective partners in the establishment and growth of the Movement. Parishads must, therefore, create such holy atmosphere in their centres as would inspire the youth to join the Math and Mission as monastic members, as also motivate other householders to come and participate in the various activities.

Ordinarily when one thinks about rejuvenation of any institution, one is apt to think of techniques and systems like survey-

ing the needs of the locality, specifying the aims and objectives, planning, target setting, laying down strategies, implementation, human and material resource management, evaluation and feed-back, rectification of shortcomings as also organizational provisions, the Constitution, the Rules & Regulations, the Bylaws, that would ensure smooth and effective functioning of the association. These technical aspects are discussed in modern management sciences. We must brief ourselves with them and use these tools in a broad way. For Ramakrishna centres, such professionalism will little avail us unless we inherit and adhere to the spiritual ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda:

1. First attempt self-realization or attain God, then do the activities of and for the world, as emphasized by Sri Ramakrishna.
2. Be pure and unselfish, as Swami Vivekananda said.
3. Make the world your own, taught the Holy Mother.

If we develop our personality on such cardinal ideals, men and money will come, techniques and systems will follow, and unsurmountable problems will vanish.

When individuals are thus soundly rooted, associations become automatically properly organized and oriented. They are

governed by love and cordiality, sacrifice and service. A few broad rules and regulations are then enough to enable the centres to carry out their activities smoothly, efficiently and effectively.

However, on the basis of experience, some practical measures can be suggested for organizing the centres: (1) Members, particularly key office bearers, must be devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, preferably initiated, who are willing to accept the verdict of Math authorities as the final word on any issue, just as Swamiji and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna accepted Holy Mother's words as the verdict of the High Court. (2) Membership should not be based on money contribution or fee. (3) Political activists must be respectfully persuaded to remain away. A noble soul and an earnest participant in the Ramakrishna Movement like Sister Nivedita left the membership of the Math when her conviction drew her to participate in National Movement. (4) Temptation to seek financial and political support from doubtful corners must be scrupulously avoided! Never should we be after quick results. Organizations built on pains and penury grow slowly but surely and soundly. Remember always the early days of the direct disciples at the Baranagore Math. Amidst what poverty and hardships they lived! (5) Each member-ashrama may have one of the monks of the Math/Mission as its Patron-in-Chief with decisive word in cases of differences among the members and at other critical times. (6) It may be stipulated in all constitutions that in the event of dissolution of the association, the assets would go to the nearest Math/Mission centre as advised by the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. That would ward off hungry eyes from greedy corners. (7) Chief functionary and a few executives may be full-time inmates, being bachelors and *vānaprasthis* without family and other encumbrances. They must live the life of *sadhakas*. That would bring life to the

centres concerned. These suggestions could find their way into our centres by establishing conventions as also by formal stipulations.

Individuals and associations thus organized, pave the way for organization of activities on sound lines. We may look to the Math/Mission for guidance and models. First priority must go to the maintenance of shrine and regular conduct of spiritual programmes like prayer, readings, discourses and the like, and the spread of the spiritual message of the Holy Trio through distribution/sale of the books and journals of the Order. Next comes education, formal & non-formal, academic & vocational. Then, welfare activities, medical & health services, general charities, and so on.

The Ramakrishna Advaita Vedanta gives us a hi-tech that gives life and super-effect to the activities. Sri Ramakrishna taught it to Swamiji and he in turn spread it most enthusiastically throughout the world: '*Śiva jñāne jīva sevā*, serve man as God'. We should practise self-realization and work for the welfare of the world — '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*'. We see God everywhere and work with humility and a sense of gratitude for being chosen as God's instrument for His work.

Rejuvenation of the Parishads is possible only when we organize ourselves, our associations, and activities on the basis of principles of Advaita Vedanta as lived and taught by the Holy Trio.

Yes, this is philosophy, but not a wishful thinking trying to shy away from facing ground realities, nor is it basking in the sun of the supreme philosophy of life. The Advaita Vedanta has been the highest-ever flight of human aspiration; yet it has been practical enough to address every sphere/aspect of life. It is true that over some centuries past, the living vibrant philosophy stagnated and degenerated into a dazed de-energized philosophy; became confined to learned dialogues, commentar-

ies and came to be associated with hermits living in caves and forests aloof from society. This is exactly the situation, Sri Ramakrishna with his *Pārshads* like Swami Vivekananda came to remedy, and Swamiji did proclaim that his mission, as given to him by his Master, was to proclaim the inherent essential divinity of men and women, and to help each individual to manifest it. He did call upon his followers to bring forth Vedanta from caves and monasteries to fields, workshops and to the work-a-day world we live in, and to suffuse every activity with Vedantic truth. He coined the phrase 'Practical Vedanta'.

To be an instrument for running a Ramakrishna centre calls for spiritual practice. This must be underlined that the entire edifice of the Math and Mission, with an enviable record of appreciation won all over the world for its various activities, was built on the *sadhana* done by Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sri Ma, Swamiji, other direct disciples and their followers down to this day. We must meditate upon Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practices for twelve long years, Holy Mother's life of meditation amidst arduous work of day-to-day life, and Swamiji's and other disciples' *sadhanas* involving hardship at Dakshineswar, Cossipore Garden House, Baranagore Math, and all along thereafter.

True, they were Divine Personalities who incarnated on earth, and we are ordi-

nary mortals. But the Holy Founders have all assured us that they did all the *sadhana* for 'us'. Sri Ramakrishna said he has created the mould, we have simply to cast ourselves in that mould. He has done sixteen annas, and one anna — a sixteenth part of a rupee — would be enough for his contemporary stalwarts like Nag Mahashaya, Master Mahashaya, Girish and others. We may even do with one paise — one hundredth part of a rupee. The Holy Trio are indeed so very compassionate! If we would but advance one step towards them, THEY would rush ten steps to embrace us! Never, never would THEY abandon us.

The P³ formula that emerges for the rejuvenation of our Parishads are: Practise, Perform, and Preach.

Practise self-realization, purity and unselfishness, i.e., spiritual development of individuals.

Perform service to man as God, and carry out various activities like running schools, managing hospitals, conducting relief works, etc.

Preach divinity, sacrifice, and service by taking the Holy Message of the Holy Trio from home to home, from individual to individual, through books, magazines and, most important, through personal life and conduct.

To sum up, let our lives portray the ideals. □

The word duty is an abstract term and, like all abstract terms, cannot be defined. We can, however, get some idea of what is meant by it if we study the different scriptures and reduce their teaching to its simplest form.... Any action that leads one from selfishness to unselfishness, that broadens and elevates the character, that brings freedom to the soul and directs it Godward, is good, and therefore becomes the highest duty of every individual.... When a man has realized this, his idea of duty will no longer be confined to the sayings of any book or of any person, but will be founded upon the universal law of unselfishness.

—Swami Abhedananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 102-3

The Ordeal of Love: Sister Nivedita's Struggles in America for the Education of Women in India

DR. MAMATA RAY AND DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

In this article the learned authors present how Sister Nivedita, possessed of genuine devotion to the Guru, accepted the work entrusted to her by him and struggled in the United States of America defending her Guru against those who misunderstood him and leaving no stones unturned for collecting money for her school [established a hundred years ago, in November 1898] in Calcutta for the education of women. Each such endeavour, whether it is fruitful or ends in failure, has a message, learning which is the purpose. Here, Nivedita learnt how difficult it was to collect funds for the heathen from a Christian land — a lesson which Swamiji too had learnt and expressed without fear — and how again neither her acceptance of Hinduism nor her defence of her Guru was welcome in a Christian land — at least then. We have another message too, a positive one: that sincerity to the work at hand and grace of the Guru make the apparently impossible possible, make formidable barriers crumble to pieces. We may also observe that when the disciple has tried the utmost, the Guru graciously shows the way and makes the goal attainable with less struggle and less frustration.

The uplift of the masses and women topped the list of priorities in Swami Vivekananda's plan of work for India¹, and he assigned to Sister Nivedita² the great responsibility of raising Indian women. It is with words such as 'I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me'³ that

Swamiji issued his call to Sister Nivedita to come to India to dedicate herself to the cause of education of Indian women. And the moment she received this call she felt: 'I had heard a call which would change my life.'⁴ Nivedita observes, 'It had been taken for granted from the first, that at the earliest opportunity I would open a girls' school in Calcutta.'⁵ Being true to her Master, Nivedita opened her school for girls in Bagh-bazar of Calcutta in November 1898. The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi inaugurated⁶ the school and blessed it along with Swami Vivekananda. The acute scarcity of funds, however, forced Nivedita to close down the school in the summer of 1899 and made her struggle for raising funds for the school, i.e. for the education of women in India, from

1. To quote the exact words of Swami Vivekananda: 'The uplift of women, the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India.' — *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, pp. 489–90. [Hereafter CWW].

2. Born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Ireland in 1867 and initiated by Swami Vivekananda as Sister Nivedita on 25 March 1898.

3. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 35–6. [Hereafter CWS].

4. CWS, vol. 1, p. 36.

5. CWS, vol. 1, p. 101.

6. The date of inauguration was 13 November 1898.

November 1899 through June 1900 in far away United States of America. This article gives an account of Nivedita's struggles in America and in the process illustrates at once the depth of her commitment to her Guru's ideal and the intensity of pains she willingly undertook for the love she bore India.

I

Nivedita's school, as above-said, was in the throes of a serious financial crisis in the summer of 1899. Since its inception in 1898 till the summer of 1899 the school sustained itself with some financial grant from the Maharaja of Kashmir plus Nivedita's personal funds. With both these initial sources getting exhausted within six months of the opening of the school, there arose the intimidating problem of finding funds for the ongoing school work. The fight against the epidemic of plague⁷ had exhausted the Belur monastery's reserve fund and the monastery was not in a position to help out.⁸ The school did not have any permanent fund of its own either. Any help from the British government of India was completely out of the question. Nor was it desired in any way by Nivedita. Not knowing what to do in a situation such as this, Nivedita betook herself to her Guru to find a way out of the impasse. Swami Vivekananda was ailing at this time and Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod⁹ were urging him to come to the United States of America for a change, which, they hoped, would improve his health. As a solution to Nivedita's fund

problem, he thought that Nivedita could as well accompany him to the West and earn money for her school in the United States by lecturing to American women on the life and conditions of women in India.

Swami Vivekananda was, during his first visit to America, seeking aid from the West for his impoverished people in the name of the spiritual greatness of a country which had done so much for the world once but which had subsequently become impoverished and, therefore, was in need of material assistance of the prosperous West. Implicit in the appeal was a call to the moral obligations of the West, which Nivedita followed up six years later in 1899. She appealed to the American audience at once in the name of the *greatness* of her Guru as well as the *greatness* of the country which her Guru and she now represented, with a view to evoking the Americans, especially the American women's sense of obligation to do something for the education of their sisters in India. It should be emphatically pointed out that, true to her Master's teachings on Karma Yoga and *nishkama karma*, Nivedita made the appeal from a sense of strength. In doing one's *karma*, as her Master would say, with a sense of strength born out of one's free will of doing good to others, one truly realizes oneself.¹⁰ Sufferings there will certainly be in working with such a goal, but fulfilment lies in forbearing such sufferings manfully.

That exactly was the motto of Nivedita in her mission to the West. Aid-seeking it certainly was, but in doing so she did not bleat like a sheep. She roared like a lion, even though her enterprise entailed endless suffering for her. As for the record of her sufferings we have to turn to Nivedita's letters which give a graphic and day-by-day account of the pains she had to undergo in the

7. At the instance of Swami Vivekananda, the fight against plague was led by Nivedita during the summer of 1899.

8. As a matter of fact, the Belur monastery itself was so much impoverished at this time that several of the monks had to go on begging tours.

9. Both American friends and disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

10. 'That work alone brings unattachment and bliss, wherein we work as masters of our own minds.' — CWV, vol. 5, p. 241.

American cities she had occasion to visit in connection with her mission.

II

That Nivedita was anxious to serve the cause of her Guru could be seen from what she wrote on 15 July 1899 while she was in the Suez Canal on the way to the West: 'I am anxious, if I go to America at all, to go first and foremost, on Swami's WORK to perform some definite service.'¹¹ In fact, as early as on 7 June 1899, even before she set sail for the West, she, having declared that 'my life is actually my own for Swamiji', wrote:

I might go to the same towns [in America] where Ramabai [a Christian convert who assailed Hinduism and criticized Swami Vivekananda] had been — and lecture there.... I could form huge society, each member of which in England, America, and India should contribute a minimum of 1 penny or 2 cents or 1 anna per annum — that would be grand.¹²

Nivedita was even more explicit about her plan of work in America in her letter of July 21:

My notion is to take deliberately all those towns in America where Ramabai has attacked Swami — and to go there AS NUN completely and give say 3 days' lectures — 'What I have seen in India' some such title and deliberately acknowledge perhaps that the reports of R's presence there had made me feel the bond of common interest — and propose, flatly, that they should finance my work to the limit of their power.

My message will not be political or social — apart from the fact that I love Hinduism with my whole heart and soul, and have not ONE *flaw* to find in it, I would preach the conventual ideal. It wants *asserting* [italics added] in Protestant countries anyway.¹³

Nivedita ends this letter with profound admiration for her Guru 'how I love and worship him! I wish he'd ask me to cut my heart out and give it to him'.¹⁴

Nivedita's anxiety to serve her Guru 'as well as my girls' comes out in clear terms in yet another letter that she wrote to Swami Akhandananda after having reached London in August 1899:

Swamiji was in splendid form when he landed ... and he means to go on quickly to America, where they will take care of him.

I am to wait here till a family wedding is over, and after that I am to follow him, and start work in America, too. You must ask Sri Ramakrishna *to let me be of some real use to Him, as well as my girls* [italics added]. I am sure He will let me find the money I want for them — but Oh! How I want to do something for my Guru himself!¹⁵

Swami Vivekananda left London for New York on August 16. In a letter written on the following day, Nivedita expressed her total dedication and her *longing* to be at work for her Guru: 'I long to be at work for him.... There is nothing worth *doing* — save to worship him. There is no place worth having — save that of the dust upon his feet.'¹⁶

Nivedita left England in September 1899 to join Swami Vivekananda in the Ridgely Manor, the country house of the Leggetts, the friends of her Guru, which was some one hundred and fifty miles from New York. 'Do you think, Margot, that you can collect the money you want in the West!', Swami Vivekananda had asked Nivedita on the ship during their journey together to the West. 'I don't think, Swami — *I know*,' Nivedita had replied. 'I hope so,' Swamiji had said, 'there were two things that I

11. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), vol. 1, p. 180. [Hereafter *Letters*.]

12. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 161.

13. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 188.

14. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 189.

15. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 194–5. Letter dated 10 August 1899.

16. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 199. Letter dated 17 August 1899.

wanted to see before my death — one is done and this is the rest.¹⁷ Swami Vivekananda believed that an account of Hindus and Hindu women by a western woman having the experience of living an orthodox Hindu life in India would be appreciated by the western public, and Nivedita, 'thirsting for the combat'¹⁸ believed that the time had come to redeem her pledge to her Guru, to justify the faith and hope that her Guru had in her. Little did Nivedita know or anticipate at that time how difficult and even agonizing was going to be the task of collecting funds in America for the education of Indian women.

Nivedita wanted to get into the grind of her *work* immediately after her arrival at the Ridgely Manor on 20 September 1899. But Swamiji himself wanted her to have a pause before the battle, and Nivedita utilized the one and half months between 20 September and 5 November in writing her little book, *Kali The Mother*. On November 5, Swamiji called a halt to the 'pause' asking Nivedita 'to go out into the world and fight for him — the only thing that he now wanted — before he could pass away from the world into peace of death.'¹⁹ That same afternoon happened what Nivedita calls 'the event of my life' and 'the great turning point', and that 'happening' is best described in Nivedita's own language:

On Sunday afternoon [5 November 1899] Swami insisted on my coming and packing with him, and as I worked he took out a couple of silk turbans to give the girls [the daughters of the Leggetts]. The two pieces of cotton cloth — gerrua colour — for Mrs. Bull. He called me to my room, where Mrs. Bull sat

writing, to give these — and left the turbans on one side.

First he shut the door — then he arranged the cloth as a skirt and chudder round her [Mrs. Bull's] waist — then he called her a Sannyasini and putting one hand on her head and one on mine he said, 'I give you *all* that Ramakrishna P. [Paramahansa] gave to me. What came to us from a Woman I give to you two women. Do what you can do with it. I cannot trust myself. I do not know what I might do tomorrow and ruin the work. Women's hands will be the best anyway to hold what comes from a Woman — from Mother. Who and what She is, I do not know, I have never seen Her, but Ramakrishna P. saw Her and touched Her — like this (touching my sleeve). She may be a great disembodied spirit for all I know. Anyway I cast the load on you. I am going away to be at peace ... It is like a release. I have borne it all this time, and now I have given it up....'²⁰

Thus happened Nivedita's 'the event of my life', 'the great turning point' and 'the dear St. Sara's'.²¹

Happy and gay as Nivedita was in receiving the power of her Master, she could

20. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 233–4.

21. If one reads between the lines, one will find that this whole episode entailed the non-formal initiation of Mrs. Bull to *sannyasa*. Nivedita was given the *power* and blessings by Swamiji, but not really even the informal ordination to *sannyasa*. Rightly therefore, she decided to keep to her title of *Brahmacharini*.

Referring to what he did on 5 November, 1899, Swamiji himself wrote to Mrs. Bull: 'I am but a child; what work have I to do? My powers I passed over to you.... The *word* has gone to you and the voice to Margo. No more it is in me. I am glad. I am resigned.' — *CWV*, vol. 8, pp. 490–1.

Did Nivedita ever wear the Gerua cloth? There are disputes on this point. Lizelle Reymond, the French biographer of Sister Nivedita, claims that, 'Several times, how-

17. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 189. The establishing of the monastery at Belur had been done. The work for the uplift of women remained to be done.

18. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 207.

19. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 233. Letter dated 11 November 1899.

not but think:

...as his [Swamiji's] Master lived only 1½ years after giving his Power to him — so he has but a short time to live. Life has been torture to him,²² and I would not ask him to endure it longer — merely for our pleasure — but Oh Yum Yum if your prayers have any weight with the Eternal, see to it that his time becomes one of play and conquest. If I should die a thousand deaths hereafter in a thousand flaming hells — I implore — no, I demand — of the Supreme — that I be allowed to win and lay some laurels at his feet while he is yet with us.²³

ever, she spoke in public in the ochre-yellow robe of the monks, and she wore it in her own house during the later part of her life.' — *The Dedicated*, corrected Samata edition, (Madras: Samata Books, 1985), p. 213. [Hereafter *The Dedicated*]. Pravrajika Atmaprana, the 'official' biographer of Nivedita, on the other hand, vigorously denies that Nivedita ever wore the Gerua cloth. To quote her, 'As Nivedita was not initiated into Sannyasa, she never put on the Gerua habit of a Sannyasini. But in various books, and articles, she is described as "Gerua-clad", but this is nothing but a streak of imagination.' [*Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 3rd ed., October 1977), p. 87]. Atmaprana approves of Abanindranath's characterization of Nivedita as 'Mahasveta'. (Ibid.)

22. Swami Vivekananda was going through both physical and mental suffering at this period of his life. Physically, he had been suffering from chronic diabetes (insulin was not discovered as yet) and acute asthma giving him at times such fits of coughing that he nearly choked under their impact. His mental suffering came from the news of the poverty-stricken Math at Belur and the news as well of dissensions among the members of the London Vedanta group and the New York Vedanta Society.

23. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 235. This letter, again,

III

What followed immediately afterwards is Nivedita's eight-month-long lecture tour in different cities and towns of America.

Chicago

Nivedita began with Chicago. The first lecture she delivered there was before the children of an elementary school. She gave them an idea of the geography of India and told them stories about Dhruva, Prahlada and Gopala of the *Puranas*. The next day, Nivedita spoke before a Missionary Society on 'The Condition of Indian Women'. She had obviously presented the Indian women 'in a loving way'²⁴ and this was not to the liking of the Missionaries. For her part, Nivedita did not like either the Missionary Society 'where the subtle mental atmosphere was too awful for words. That ... made one tingle with despair'²⁵. The talk seemed 'a terrible failure to me — like contriving to breathe under the weight of the Pyramids'.²⁶ Compared to these missionaries, the Elementary School children she spoke to on the previous day seemed to her to be 'so well-educated'.²⁷

On November 20, Nivedita spoke at the Hull House²⁸ on 'The Religious Life in India' wherein she related her experience of the Pilgrims' Camp at Pahelgam and stated how

shows how dearly Nivedita loved and worshipped her Guru and how eager and earnest she was in getting to work for her Guru. The words she wrote in an earlier letter dated 21 July 1899 (*Letters*, vol. 1, p. 189) were not mere expression of emotion; it represented the feelings of one who found total freedom in total surrender to the beloved.

24. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 239.

25. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 242.

26. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 243.

27. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 244.

28. Nivedita put up at the Hull House in Chicago. She was greatly impressed by the simple and natural atmosphere of the Hull

she felt about Dakshineswar and Sri Ramakrishna.

In none of these lectures mentioned above, Nivedita asked for any fee or received any subscription. Her opportunities were so far few and her 'fight' was therefore 'slow'. She was not 'out of heart' yet, but she did not know 'where I am in the battle now'.²⁹

The presence of Swami Vivekananda at Chicago at this stage changed whatever mood of uncertainty there was in Nivedita at this time. Swamiji came from New York to Chicago en route to Los Angeles. His plan was to establish some more Vedanta Centres in America including the one at Los Angeles. Nivedita went over to Mary Hale's place at Chicago to give a talk there on November 24 and was delighted to meet Swamiji who was putting up with the Hales at that time. By Nivedita's own estimate, the talk she gave on that day before an assembly of twenty-five people was:

too grossly uninteresting for words. But there, everyone without exception promised to help as much as they could, to form a Guild, or to try and get me to other towns, or by giving a dollar a year — which was the amount I asked. ... It looked to me yesterday as if the income of 3000 dollars a year would not be difficult to raise. But that may be *too optimistic*.³⁰

So, with the presence of Swami Vivekananda enthusing her, Nivedita was at this

House, which, she felt, was in sharp contrast with the atmosphere of other places of America, marked by 'the abundance of money — comfort — and the glare of electric light — and mechanical contrivance'. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 241.

She felt quite at home in the Hull House for another reason: 'Everyone [there] is so dear about India.' *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 249.

29. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 247. Letter dated 22 November 1899.

30. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 249. Letter dated 25 November 1899.

point of time thinking of forming a guild of help in America. Her demand was extremely modest: only a voluntary contribution of one dollar a year from every willing person, totalling an income of three thousand dollars a year.

Nivedita benefited from Swamiji's presence at Chicago in respect of another lecture. She was slated to speak on December 1 on the 'Ancient Arts of India' which was to be paid for by a subscription to her educational work in India. Except for the fact that she despised 'the Europeanised degradation of Hindu art',³¹ she did not know much of this subject. She turned to Swamiji for the necessary instruction and with that she had a successful lecture on the subject. She 'was paid 15 dollars — and received orders for Hindu brass utensils and some embroideries'.³²

On December 6, Nivedita received an invitation in a Women's Club in Chicago to participate in a discussion on 'Colonization'. The speech she made at the Club was recognized as an outstanding event of that afternoon. Almost every second sentence that she uttered was applauded and 'then it was a desert of congratulations and introduction and engagements for a mad and bewildering hour'.³³ In her euphoria over striking 'the heart of Chicago in Women's Club', Nivedita forgot for the time being that her aim was really to collect a minimum of three thousand dollars a year and that she had made little progress in that direction. She was still thinking of the possibilities: 'If I get 100 people here to promise me 1 dollar a year each for 10 years it would be 1000 dollars'.³⁴ Knowing her for what she was, Swami Vivekananda wrote her in a letter en route to Los Angeles (he left Chicago on the

31. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 248.

32. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 254.

33. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 257.

34. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 259. Letter dated 6 December 1899.

evening of December 4): 'Your work in Chicago will not do much I fear save give you education in methods here.'³⁵ Swamiji did not think much of Nivedita's one dollar scheme and Nivedita herself began to realize that her constant speaking engagements without much success on the financial front had the effect of tiring her out physically and mentally. The mere tension of it all, as she acknowledged herself, was the 'foolish waste of strength'.³⁶

Nivedita wrote about the difficulties she was suffering in Chicago to Swami Vivekananda who wrote back the following lines consoling and yet inspiring her to keep to the path of suffering she had chosen for the sake of the well-being of the world:

If you are really ready to take the world's burden, take it by all means. But do not let us hear your groans and curses. Do not frighten us with your sufferings, so that we came to feel we were better off with our own burdens. The man who really takes the burden blesses the world and goes his own way. He has not a word of condemnation, a word of criticism, not because there was no evil but that he has taken it on his own shoulders willingly, voluntarily.³⁷

At the time of writing the letter quoted above, Swamiji himself was suffering tremendously,²² and he wrote to Mrs. Bull:

The present looks very gloomy indeed;

35. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 258–9.

36. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 260.

Some persons whom Nivedita encountered in her meetings were taxing enough for her. About one such American lady, Nivedita wrote that that lady 'was like 20 storms in one tea cup ... It was tiring to be assured that the American woman was the *only* creature on earth who could claim direct descent from Olympian Zeus at this moment, every third sentence'. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 260.

37. *CWV*, vol. 7, p. 521. Letter dated 6 December 1899.

but I am a fighter and must die fighting, not give way.³⁸

Nivedita too understood that suffering was the lot of the world's best and bravest — those who wanted to do good to others. She set herself to working again, believing that it will all be to the good in the end. Chicago did not give her much financially and now she resolved to continue her lecture tour to some other states. The tenth of January 1900 was the date she fixed for leaving for Jackson and Ann Arbor, two small towns in the State of Michigan. Before leaving Chicago however, she thought of setting up a committee with Mary Leggett as the Secretary for carrying on her work in Chicago and met with a rebuff which distressed her intensely. This 'last blow' in Chicago is best described in her own words:

It seems to me that I have just received the last and worst blow of all. One of Swami's earliest friends [that is, Mary Leggett] has been in to say that she and her family would rather not be identified with my work. They wanted to help but find themselves out of sympathy.

...I feel utterly discouraged. If this is the attitude of Swami's people, how can I ever expect to do anything anywhere?

It is so like climbing in gravel! Most people make me sit down for hours and tell them all about everything, and then they say they are so much interested and I have given them great pleasure but they never offer to give me anything back, not even one dollar.

I have known what it is to feel individually helpless, but I think today that the larger the cause is, the worse is the feeling of despair....

This is all great weakness, and I should not tell it ... Swami's words, 'The confession of weakness makes weak', ring in my ears. I know I must go on patiently until I meet the right people, whom I surely shall find here

38. *CWV*, vol. 6, p. 420. Letter dated 12 December 1899.

and there. If there are none, my poor babies cannot be educated, that is all!³⁹

Nivedita's letter, quoted above, more than any other source, gives a graphic picture of the sufferings she had undergone in Chicago in her efforts to collect funds there. And how similar was her Guru's experience in California, especially in San Francisco:

I thought I could make money here in California and pay them [the Belur Monastery] up quickly. Now I have entirely failed in California financially. It is worse here [San Francisco] than in Los Angeles. They come in crowds when there is a free lecture and very few when there is something to pay.⁴⁰

What made Nivedita despair most about her efforts in Chicago is her inability to form a group or a guild of help in Chicago. She tried in meeting after meeting and could not find a single person to rise up for her cause. In her utter despair, she wrote:

You do not know how uphill is the work of founding a group in Chicago. I seem to meet with endless difficulties....⁴¹

As for Nivedita's difficulties with Mary Hale (arising out of the latter's refusing to be the Secretary of the proposed committee), it was due to Nivedita's naive expectation that since Mary Hale was the spiritual daughter of Swami Vivekananda engaged in working for the cause of her Master, she [Nivedita] was entitled to receive the cooperation of Mary Hale. That she could not take people for granted was a lesson she learnt from Miss Josephine MacLeod. In defence of Mary Hale, Miss MacLeod rightly pointed out that 'no one who has ever known and loved him [Swami Vivekananda] can ever take anybody else's version of him — not even yours'.⁴² The right approach for

Nivedita, Miss MacLeod pointed out very perceptively, was to stand *on her own feet*, living *her own life in her own way* and giving people in America *her own message*, independently of Swami Vivekananda. To quote Miss MacLeod's advice to Nivedita:

So you must strike out alone with new people — make your own audiences — your own disciples in your own way, and two years of training in America is not too much. The women problem is left to you and Swami should be left out — obliterated in your outward work. He is in fact the source of your life as he is of most of ours. To have known him as we know him is the greatest blessing this life could give and our knowledge of this is the strong bond between you, ss [Saint Sara] and me — but there it ends.

The Hales adore Swami in their own way and not ours.⁴³

The letter of Miss MacLeod brought not only comfort to the despairing soul of Nivedita; it made her see the truth as well. A grateful Nivedita wrote back in apprehension:

I am going to fix my eyes on your message 'Live your own life. Speak your own message,' and I know when I make the inevitable mistakes I can come to you, without ever a reproach.⁴⁴

According to Lizelle Reymond, so far as Chicago in general was concerned, Nivedita seemed to be up against a blank wall. Reymond identifies the following as the reasons for Nivedita's failure in Chicago:

Chicago's wealthier society gave Nivedita a colder welcome. Her firm refusal

(Continued on page 649)

39. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 296. Letter dated 9 January 1900.

40. *CWV*, vol. 8, p. 496. Letter dated 7 March 1900.

41. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 309. Letter dated 26 January 1900.

42. Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1977), p. 104. See Miss MacLeod's letter to Nivedita dated 14 January 1900. [Hereafter *Sister Nivedita*].

43. *Sister Nivedita*, p. 104.

44. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 306. Letter dated 23 January 1900.

Religion Minus Its Evils

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

Swami Shraddhanandaji says in this article: 'Religion is neither a compulsive dogma nor an irrational code of rituals. The purpose of religion is to elevate humanity, to free us from selfishness and passion, to instil in us love and knowledge of God. If, in any religious scene, this objective is overshadowed by merely mechanical observance of certain codified rules, without bringing strength and nobility of character, then that particular religious endeavour is heading for disaster. Religion must be taken as a constitutional necessity, like food and air.' One cannot perhaps set out more clearly what religion truly is and what the pitfalls are.

Those who are drawn to religion are often led to think that religion is not only always good, but absolutely good.* This erroneous thinking is not justified by the facts. Religion, not properly understood and applied, can breed all conceivable evils. Misdirected religion has been responsible for terrible hatred and bloodshed, tyranny, exploitation and immorality. In many cases, religion has been a stumbling block to scientific, social and economic progress. Critics of religion have a basis for their reasoning. The case against religion can in fact be justified.

'How many evils have flowed down from religion,' said Lucretius, the Roman philosopher of 57 BC. Voltaire of France and Neitzche of Germany, both eminent thinkers, did not spare religion. 'The truths of religion are never so understood as by those who have lost the power of reasoning' said Voltaire, while Neitzche tersely commented, 'A religious man thinks only of

himself.' When Karl Marx stated, 'Religion is the opiate of the people,' he was voicing the opinion of many observers who had seen how, in the name of religious authority, people are brutally subdued and exploited.

It is ironic that religion, the true purpose of which is to bring harmony, peace, freedom, strength and love to mankind, should become a doorway to tyranny, corruption and servility. This conforms with the general trend in nature, that no progress happens in a straight line. The periodical degeneration of man's spiritual and ethical ideals is described in the *Bhagavad Gita* as the phenomenon of *dharma*. According to the view of the *Gita*, this degeneration is a part of the process of human development. Therefore, we cannot complain too much, but we can certainly be careful and have the wisdom to realize that religion *can* have pitfalls. If knowledge is power, recognizing these pitfalls is one important step towards keeping religion sound and safe. There have been world thinkers, highly religious personalities, who were not afraid to present the whole picture of religion, the bright lines as also the scars, the clear sections as also the blurred regions. 'Religion is a disease, but it is a noble disease,' said Heraclitus, the distinguished philosopher of ancient Greece. While admitting that religion can have a dark side, Kant, the great German philoso-

* This article was first published in a Special Number of Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, in 1969. Ms. Lalita Parvati Maly of California, a disciple of Revered Swami Shraddhanandaji Maharaj, in communicating this article for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata* so as to reach a wider audience, correctly observes that the article is very inspiring.

pher, warns the critics of religion not to go too far. 'Religion,' he said, 'is too important a matter to its devotees to be a subject of ridicule.' Swami Vivekananda presents both sides very soberly:

The intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion, and the most diabolical hatred that humanity has known has also come from religion. The noblest words of peace that the world has ever heard have come from men on the religious plane, and the bitterest denunciation that the world has ever known has been uttered by religious men. The higher the object of any religion and the finer its organisation, the more remarkable are its activities. No other human motive has deluged the world with blood so much as religion; at the same time, nothing has brought into existence so many hospitals and asylums for the poor; no other human influence has taken such care, not only of humanity, but also of the lowest of animals, as religion has done. Nothing makes us so cruel as religion, and nothing makes us so tender as religion. This has been so in the past, and will also, in all probability, be so in the future.¹

The most dangerous evil in relation to religion is manifest when the true purpose of religion is forgotten. Religion is neither a compulsive dogma nor an irrational code of rituals. The purpose of religion is to elevate humanity, to free us from selfishness and passion, to instil in us love and knowledge of God. If, in any religious scene, this objective is overshadowed by merely mechanical observance of certain codified rules, without bringing strength and nobility of character, then that particular religious endeavour is heading for disaster. Religion must be taken as a constitutional necessity, like food and air.

At the back of our body and mind there is our soul, the centre of our consciousness. According to Vedanta, each soul is eternally free and perfect. The ignorant man does not know his soul. Identified with his body and mind, he functions as a limited individual and is caught up in the net of *samsara*, relative existence. This is his bondage, an abnormal and miserable state for him. But this bondage can be removed. The way is religion. Just as food removes hunger, so spiritual knowledge dispels the infatuations of our body and mind, and installs us on the immortal, fearless, ever-blissful majesty of our soul. When we understand religion in this light, religion ceases to be associated with something external. Like food and air, it becomes a daily need for the nourishment of our real being, our spiritual nature. If on the other hand, we have not grasped the true aim of religion and are occupied with many dogmas, obsessed with fears and false hopes, there is no transformation of our character, no expansion of heart. Spurious objectives keep us busy and distracted. In the name of religion we pursue selfishness and material gain. Religion in this context has become a diabolical evil for us.

Sectarianism and fanaticism are two other great evils which tarnish the name of religion. The theology that presents and preaches a God related to a chosen group of people and a system of beliefs and practices which must be accepted as final and universal, is a fallacious theology. Just as we accept differences in the faces of people, differences in language, food, habits and costumes of different people, in the same way we must accept difference of religious beliefs. 'My concept of God is the only truth.' 'More worship is the only way of salvation.' These attitudes have often paved the way to disgraceful fights and bloodshed. A man should be free to follow the concept of God that appeals to his heart and practise worship and prayer in a manner that is most suitable to him. He has no right to force his

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 375-6.

belief on others. Where we fail to understand or tolerate the viewpoints of others, we plant the seeds of discord and hate.

The role of the priest in the performance of ritualistic practices in religion is a recognized necessity. This role may be misused and the priest can exploit the faithful in the name of the supernatural. The noble function of the priest then degrades into a complex, selfish behaviour called priestcraft. Priestcraft has been responsible for many sufferings on the part of the religious seeker. It is an evil which should be guarded against uncompromisingly.

When reasoning and the scientific approach are banished from the field of religious pursuit the door is opened to superstition, weakness and fear. If God is the Light of all lights, He cannot be antagonistic to man's power of judgement and search for knowledge. Science is the systematic, unbiased study of facts. These facts may be physical, biological, psychological, or spiritual. Religion, as the study of spiritual truth, can therefore be labelled as a science. Each science has its own technique of investigation. Religion too, as a spiritual science, has

its unique methods of exploration. So religion can face rational evaluation and factual analysis. If it does not, it has nourished seeds of evil.

Lastly, we should never forget that the vitality and usefulness of religion depends primarily on its being put into practice. If we really love religion, we must be prepared to practise its teachings in our daily life. God, soul, faith, devotion, self-knowledge, these should not remain empty words to us. Our aim should be to experience these truths as tangibly as we experience the space around us, our own bodies, our own pleasure and pain. When we lose the initiative to practise, remaining satisfied with merely talking about religion, we deprive ourselves of the positive blessings of religion. We then argue, quarrel, fight, hate and injure — all that in the name of religion!

If with care, patience and understanding, these pitfalls are avoided, religion can bring spiritual fulfilment to us. This fulfilment must not be taken as an individual achievement. A person who has seen God, is a pillar of strength to society, is a beacon-light to all humanity. □

The Ordeal of Love: Sister Nivedita's Struggles...

(Continued from page 646)

to accept a fee for her lectures, and her identification with Swami Vivekananda — who had his both followers and opponents — alienated a large section of the public in the first place. Then, too, she spoke of a philosophical and mystical India, instead of playing the role of an English journalist, as she had been ex-

pected to do, and revealing the secrets of her sensational initiation into Hinduism. Her oversimple appearance in her nun's robe seemed out of place. All told, the tide seemed set against her.⁴⁵

(to be continued)

45. *The Dedicated*, p. 216.

It is He who is manifested through all. Then whom to blame and whom to criticize?

—Swami Advaitananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 103

Ego: Ripe and Unripe

SWAMI DESHIKATMANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna talks about two types of ego: the ripe and the unripe. People labour under the effect of the unripe ego, which the author further divides into the bloated and the contracted ego. The way to peace lies not in cultivating the unripe ego, but in maintaining a relationship with God as His child, His servant, or His devotee. This ripe ego has the form of ego, but, by not binding one to the world of maya, conduces to liberation.

Swami Deshikatmananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

A few children after the school hour were walking towards an overbridge. An astonishing sight was awaiting them: a long queue of vehicles for a few kilometres, blocked by a lorry in the overbridge. Policemen were trying to control the crowd and make the traffic move. When the children reached the spot, they saw crestfallen drivers, cleaners and policemen not knowing what to do. A lorry with a heavy load was stuck in the middle of the bridge at the low crossbar! They were not able to push it through or pull it back! One of the intelligent kids started laughing loudly and pointed out to his friends, 'Look, all the wheels are bloated, if you eject the air in the tyre, the lorry can pass under the crossbar.' It was a great revelation to the elders who had been scratching their heads. Within a few minutes it was done and all the stranded vehicles, men and women could resume their journey.

Similar is the case with the men and women with bloated egos. They not only block their own progress in any field but also block others' progress. They neither enjoy peace and happiness themselves nor allow others to do the same.

Origin of the Ego

What is this ego? Can the ego bloat? If it can bloat, can it be contracted also? Is there any difference between bloating of ego and expanding of ego?

What the modern scientists could not discover through their research, our ancient rishis (seers) have thought over, meditated and discovered through intuition—many truths regarding human personality, nature's secrets, and the divine origin.

Natural phenomena like lightning, thunder, rain, storm, etc. attracted their attention. Changes in the human personality like birth, childhood, youth, old age and death also stimulated their mind. They tried to control external nature. It was always intriguing to them as to who had control over the various phenomena of nature. Indra, Varuna, Agni and other gods were worshipped, and each extolled as the Supreme Being. But it did not satisfy them. Finally, they turned their attention to the internal world which is in the cavity of the heart of all beings. They studied the internal sense organs of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing through which the mind functions. As they dived deep into their being, through concentration of the mind and through contemplation, they discovered different facets of their existence. The internal world was vast and deep. Finally they discovered that whatever existed in the external world also had their parallels in the internal world. Mind, to them, became an internal instrument. They found there is the vital force (Prana) which activates every activity of the body and mind. There is the Buddhi (Intel-

ligence) to discriminate, analyse and draw conclusions. There is the Chitta in which is stored all the impressions of the past and present. They found the lesser 'ego' which identifies itself with the body-mind complex and considers itself as the doer, the enjoyer—an obstacle to the realization of the ultimate truth. They transcended this ego by destroying it with the sword of knowledge and came face to face with the all-pervading, effulgent, all-knowing, pure Consciousness which is the Essence, the Source of all relative existence, consciousness and bliss. They merged in It and became one with pure Brahman, the one without a second. By knowing It (the Self) the knot of the heart gets untied, all doubts become dispelled and all one's past actions become dissipated. So, until the 'ego' along with its subsidiaries merge in the pure Consciousness (Brahman), no embodied being can get liberation or freedom from the cycle of birth and death. So, until the 'ego' which identifies itself with the body, the mind, the world and enjoyment of sense pleasures is purified and developed into divine 'Ego', there is no end to miseries. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna calls it the 'ripe ego'.

How the Ego Bloats

The 'unripe ego' falls under two categories: ego with a divine characteristic and ego with a demoniac characteristic. All the great Asuras (demons) of the Puranas—Hiranyakashipu, Ravana and others (and in the modern times they have their likeness)—, were all very powerful personalities who could shake the whole world. But their ego was bloated, they were power-intoxicated, filled with hatred, jealousy, infatuation and self-aggrandizement. Personalities with bloated ego are short-sighted, of short temper, venomous and intensely self-centred. The scriptures say that the ego bloats under the following conditions of pride: pride of learning (*vidyā mada*), pride of wealth (*dhana mada*), pride of scholarship (*pāṇḍitya mada*), pride of beauty (*saundarya*

mada), pride of strength (*bala mada*), etc. Power and pelf, name and fame, etc. also makes men and women become egotistic. Each of these conduces to one's downfall and brings unhappiness all around.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna tells an anecdote with a telling effect. 'A frog had a rupee, which he kept in his hole. One day an elephant was going over the hole, and the frog, coming out in a fit of anger, raised his foot, as if to kick the elephant, and said, "How dare you walk over my head?" Such is the pride money begets!' Even a rupee coin could generate so much ego and arrogance. Think of what happens when a man or woman of indiscrimination gets power and pelf, name and fame, etc. There are many beautiful examples in the Puranas as to how the Asuras performed severe penances only to have lordship over the heavens and over all living beings. The penance they performed only bloated their ego, blinded their discrimination (*Viveka*), generated great hardship and miseries in the righteous. Finally, when the fruit of their penances got exhausted, they were killed. But the word 'killing' is applicable only to the gross body and not to the soul. Even scientifically, according to conservation of matter and energy, no energy or matter can be destroyed but one kind of energy or matter can be converted into another kind of energy or matter. Similarly there is 'death' to the gross body (disintegration of the gross body) but not to the subtle and causal bodies or to the spiritual essence. According to *Bhagavatam*, Bhagavan destroys the bloated ego by using his weapon and purifies it to attain liberation.

Bloated/Contracted Ego and Its Fury

A bloated ego often boasts 'I have done that', 'I planned it', 'I shall do that likewise', 'It is mine', 'Do you know who I am?', etc. If anybody questions the stand taken, he or she becomes angry. Further arguments make such a one furious, lose temper, become quarrelsome and shout using harsh

words. 'Wounds made by words are hard to heal,' say wise men. Thus, he or she creates more enemies. When bouts of anger re-occur frequently, he or she becomes the victim of psychosomatic ailments for which there are no definite allopathic drugs except tranquilizers, and these affect the brain cells in the long run. Professional jealousy, ego-clash, greed for enjoyment, etc. also complicate the good relationship with colleagues and friends in various work situations.

There are instances where constant harassment, pointed harsh words and scaring persons with dire consequences have blunted the ego and made the individuals shrink with unhealthy development. When an anti-social pounces upon a helpless man or woman to grab unlawfully the latter's possessions; or, a corrupt and powerful politician with an eye to grab properties or objects of enjoyment from a helpless family goes beyond the limits of propriety; or, a cultured and righteous employee is scared with ill-treatment by his boss, the ego of the victim contracts, blunts and begins to act and react helplessly according to the victimizers' whims and fancies. Such victims may also develop psychological problems when they become frustrated under such helpless conditions. Such situations may give rise to constant uncontrollable brooding over those conditions under which he or she was snubbed, humiliated and betrayed. The whole circumstance is re-enacted mentally several times, mental pictures of people, of places, of harsh words used by the victimizer will begin to revolve in the mind. When this mental brooding becomes powerful and uncontrollable, the victim begins to express through un-cogent words and actions. Thus, even a balanced man or woman begins to show signs of insanity. If proper steps are not taken at this juncture through counseling or psycho-analysis or through spiritual means, such victims will become prey to incurable insanity or psychosomatic ailments.

Snubbing the ego to create fear complex in workers is therefore an unhealthy technic used by some heartless, self-centred and corrupt administrators to fulfil their unquenched desires for worldly enjoyments or the objects of their desires.

Conclusion

The ego of a person can bloat making the individual arrogant, short-sighted, etc; it can also 'shrink' or 'contract' under unfortunate situations making an individual the victim of fear complex, turning the worker into a slave. This may lead to insanity eventually unless curative measures are taken. But when the same ego expands, an individual becomes more spiritual, righteous and develops a very powerful divine personality, whom even the evil minded cannot approach with intention to harm. There is no fear in the heart of such a divine personality.

When Buddha met Angulimala, a terror to humanity, being the killer of thousands of people, the latter was astonished to witness the fearlessness and smile on the serene countenance of Bhagavan Buddha. He became one of the foremost disciples of Buddha.

Once Manmathanath along with his rowdy friends was waiting with long sticks in their hands to beat Sri Ramakrishna. But they could not raise their sticks nor utter harsh words to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna when he alighted from the horse carriage. Manmathanath became his disciple. The 'dacoit parents' of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi bowed their heads to what they 'saw' in the personality of their divine daughter.

There are many such instances of great saints in whose presence even ferocious animals behaved like tamed pets and uncultured people like devotees. The ego of such great personalities neither 'shrunk' nor 'bloated' but expanded with purity, holiness, compassion and divine qualities.

Swami Vivekananda says 'Each soul is

(Continued on page 664)

Bindu in the Upaniṣads

R. RAMASWAMY

Sri R. Ramaswamy, of Chennai, presents in this lucid article a discussion on the bindu from various angles.

It is Indian tradition to pray to the Divine for His grace so that the human mind, engrossed in the world, can receive favour and clarity to gain insight into the nature of the ultimate Reality.

*Bhaktimān yaḥ sadotthāya
śucis-tadgata-mānasah;
Sahasraṁ vāsudevasya
nāmnāṁ etat prakīrtayet.
Yaśaḥ prāpnoti vipulaṁ
jñāti-prādhānyaṁ eva ca;
Acalāṁ śriyaṁ āpnoti
śreyaḥ prāpnoty-anuttamam.
Na bhayaṁ kvacid āpnoti
vīryaṁ tejaś-ca vindati;
Bhavaty-arogo dyutimān
bala-rūpa-guṇānvitah.*

Every man endowed with devotion who, after getting up early in the morning and purifying himself repeats this hymn of a thousand names of Vāsudeva with a mind concentrated in Him, attains to great fame, leadership among his peers, wealth that is secure and the supreme good unsurpassed by anything. He will be free from all fear, will become endowed with great courage and energy, and will be free from diseases. Beauty of form, strength of body and mind and virtuous character will be natural to him.

*(Concluding verses of
Viṣṇu Sahasranāmam, verses 125-7)*

There is a well-known proverb: 'All that glitters is not gold'. The literal meaning of the proverb is that the human mind, always preoccupied with perceiving worldly objects, even looked upon brass as gold ow-

ing to ignorance. Upon the dawn of knowledge, the mind learnt to perceive the distinction between brass and gold. When the mind of a spiritual seeker probes further into the above proverb, some deeper spiritual meaning emerges from it, like taking out treasures buried in the ocean bed.

The universe was created due to the dis-equilibrium of three *guṇas*, i.e., *sattva*, *rajas* and *taṁas*, as per Sāṅkhya Philosophy. Due to the all-pervading *Māyā Śakti*, the unreal looks like the real and the real, getting pushed into the background, becomes invisible. All the unreal glittering objects of perception in the world hide from the human mind the truth which is the eternal substratum. The whole of humanity runs after the unreal objects and forgets the real. Even those who decry this human tendency to run after the external objects, often become victims of the 'glitter' of sense objects.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sita is depicted as deceived by the demon Mārīca who, through magic, becomes a golden deer as per Rāvaṇa's instructions. Sita who was very fond of deer, on seeing the magical golden deer, asks her husband, Sri Rama, to catch the deer for her. Even Sita who is the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, to fulfil a divine purpose behaved as though she did not know the reality behind the golden deer, and like an ordinary woman became eager to possess it. Due to this false knowledge about the object of enjoyment, she became as it were a victim in the hands of Rāvaṇa and was kept in captivity in the Asoka Vana for several years. The danger of false knowledge is thus pictured in a graphic manner.

In the war that ensued, Rama killed Rāvaṇa and rescued Sita. This perhaps points to the fact that it is only Knowledge (symbolized by Rama) that can conquer the evil effects of ignorance.

The external objects deceive the human mind and drag it outside towards sense objects thus hiding the everlasting source of all happiness which is already within us. Even a mother-of-pearl looks like silver to the untrained mind. Unless the mind penetrates through *Māyā*, one cannot comprehend the reality which is the basis of every object in this universe.

The Vedanta philosophy looks upon mind as the slayer of Truth. Hence, the mind must be transcended to know the Truth. Due to its possessive nature, the mind runs after all pleasing objects and tries to possess them, not knowing that pleasure and pain are unavoidably experienced in this process. When one is unable to possess a thing, he becomes frustrated and one day he dies with his mind full of unfulfilled desires which leads him to take repeated births. But the wise man cannot allow his mind to wander about seeking objects of enjoyment, and becomes satisfied with whatever he receives and does not grieve for what he could not get, because he knows through experience that desires are not quenched through enjoyment: When combustible materials are poured into fire, the fire does not get satisfied but only burns all the more brightly seeking more and more fuel. It is therefore natural for the wise man to abide in the Atman. Because everlasting happiness lies within, the wise one knows where to look for it, and he turns the mind inward.

All the Upaniṣads preach that the *Jiva* and Brahman are eternally one and the same, that all duality is a mere superstition born of ignorance. Yogis who are capable of purifying (internalizing) their mind comprehend the nature of Brahman in the cave of their heart. Like the sun reflecting in a pool of clean water, Atman reflects in the

purified intellect.

Out of the five Bindu Upaniṣads, the *Amṛta Bindu* and the *Teja Bindu Upaniṣads* deal with all aspects of Brahman and inculcate the method one must adopt to reach the supreme state of *Brahmajñāna*. *Bindu* means a point, a drop, a dot, or a minute particle of the whole. The *Amṛta Bindu* means a drop in the fountain of *Amṛta* or nectar. In Hindu mythology, we come across the profound meaning of a drop of *amṛta*. When one drinks the *amṛta*, he remains young forever becoming freed from the clutches of old age and death. The *devas* who drank the *amṛta* which came out of the mythological milky ocean, became freed from the fear of death or decay. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (p. 456) we have an instructive discussion on the ocean of immortality:

I said to Narendra: 'Look here, my boy. God is the Ocean of Bliss. Don't you want to plunge into this Ocean? Suppose there is a cup of syrup and you are a fly. Where will you sit to sip the syrup?' Narendra said, 'I will sit on the edge of the cup and stick my head out to drink it.' 'Why?' said I. 'Why should you sit on the edge?' He replied, 'If I go far into the syrup, I shall be drowned and lose my life.' Then I said to him: 'But, my child, there is no such fear in the Ocean of Sacchidananda. It is the Ocean of Immortality. By plunging into It a man does not die; he becomes immortal. Man does not lose his consciousness by being mad about God.'

The *Bindu* also means the ninth *Āvaraṇa* in the *Śrī Cakra* which is the place of union between Kāmeśvara and Kāmeśvari. *Bindu* is otherwise called the unmanifested state of the universe. From that state the whole universe emanates. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describes *Bindu* as the Golden Egg or the Cosmic Egg or the Embryonic state of the universe. From that Cosmic Egg the *Virāṭ*, possessed of body and its organs, appeared. From Him manifold creatures including human beings came into existence. The *Virāṭ* is also called the sum total of all beings.

The *Tantra* states that in the head is the plane of *Sahasrāra*. Yogis through their spiritual power pierce the *Kalaśa* (vessel) of *amṛta* (nectar) in the *sahasrāra* and allow the nectar to flow all over their spiritual body and, tasting it, ever live in happiness. Like a scientist who turns a base metal into a precious metal, the yogis turn their minds from the poison of sense experience and tap the source of everlasting bliss by means of their yogic power.

That the *Amṛta Bindu Upaniṣad* occupies an important place among the Upaniṣads justifies its title. Though it is small in size, nevertheless it is a drop from the fountain of eternal life, a medicine to cure the disease of old age and death. This Upaniṣad inculcates first, the control of the mind in the shape of withdrawal from the sense objects as the most effective way to attain liberation. The pure mind leads one to liberation and the impure mind leads one to bondage. Hence, the mind should be controlled and engaged in the contemplation of Brahman. The process of controlling the mind (*pratyāhāra*) and concentrating it in the heart (*dhāraṇā*) leads to meditation (*dhyaṇa*). For controlling the mind one must practise concentration on AUM. AUM is a symbol or designator of Brahman. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states that the sacred symbol AUM was discovered by Prajāpati through meditation for the benefit of humanity. It is the quintessence of all the Vedas. The *Praśnopaniṣad* identifies It with the Cosmic Reality of *Para-* and *Apara-*Brahman and considers It as the 'only resting place'. He who meditates with the help of AUM, will be freed from his sinful tendencies just as a snake is relieved of its slough. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* Lord Krishna states that He is the syllable AUM. There is no other holy formula so full of sacred potency and so easily uttered as this great mantra AUM.

For any spiritual practice, one must be initiated by a *Guru*. There are three kinds of initiation prescribed in the *Teja Bindu Upaniṣad*. The first, the *Ānava*, is the ordinary

mode in which the *Guru* communicates to his disciple a *mantra*, which the latter is required to regularly repeat and meditate upon. The *Guru* also instructs him in the ways of posture, worship and meditation. The second, the *Śākta*, is a higher form of initiation and is imparted by perfected souls, who by their own power can instil higher spiritual consciousness in the disciple without his requiring to go through any external modes of worship to attain to it. But the third, the *Śāmbhava*, is the highest mode in which the greatest teachers of humanity, whose mercy knows no reason, raise the disciple at once to the highest stage of realization. The third way of initiation is transcendental in nature and so subtle in its working that it cannot be understood through ordinary human reasoning.

Like a small fire which consumes an entire forest through its tongues of fire, the *Teja Bindu Upaniṣad*, even though considered a minor Upaniṣad, contains the unmanifested form of fire which consumes all desires and attachment, and, purifying the mind, lifts it to a higher plane of consciousness, which is essential to realize the Self. This Upaniṣad, the repository of a vast collection of knowledge, conceives of the supreme Atman dwelling in the heart of all beings as the subtle centre of spiritual effulgence. This supreme realization is attained by yogis only through super-sensuous meditation.

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, chapter 6, ślokaś 20–23, Lord Krishna says about the nature of the mind and the ways to control it in the following words:

When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, one must perceive the Self by the Self. When he feels that infinite Bliss perceived by the purified intellect after transcending the senses and is established in that state permanently, he will not depart from that real state. After obtaining that exalted state, he regards

(Continued on page 658)

The Universal Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Dehradun

SWARAJ MAJUMDAR

The newly built Universal Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Kishanpur was inaugurated by **Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj**, Senior Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 11 May 1998 at 7 a.m. amidst Vedic chanting, prayer and soulful devotional songs. The presence of 163 monks/brahmacharins and several hundred devotees added lustre to the momentous occasion which was crowned by the unveiling of the full-size marble image of Sri Ramakrishna. The magnificent temple, the beautiful image inside, and the captivating Shivalik range forming the background dissolve into one exalted spiritual ideal of oneness and harmony.

After the *Mangalarati* in the morning of 11 May at the old shrine, the monks and brahmacharins of the Ramakrishna Order carried in a procession the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ma Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramachandra, and Shivalinga from the old shrine to the newly constructed temple. After circumambulating the temple thrice, the procession entered the temple headed by **Swami Ranganathanandaji** who thus inaugurated the temple and unveiled the image of Sri Ramakrishna, fulfilling a long-cherished desire of Swami Kshamanandaji, the former President of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, in general, and of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna at Dehradun, in particular.

Earlier, on 9 May afternoon, an impressive procession had been taken out, from Shivaji Dharmashala in the town, which terminated at the Parade Ground in the heart of the city. Several hundred distinguished

citizens of the valley and devotees from many parts of India participated in the rally, the chief attraction of which were the three elegantly decorated tableaux of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ma Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and Shabad Kirtan from Sikhs, Kawalli from Muslims conveying a message of harmony. **Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj** addressed the gathering.

On Sunday morning (10 May), **Swami Nikhilatmanandaji** of the Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad, gave a discourse on 'From Sri Rama to Sri Ramakrishna' in which he explained the descent of God as Incarnations and the divine sport (*līlā*) they indulged in for the well-being of humanity.

Thereafter **Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj** inaugurated a permanent Exhibition on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement and a Books Sales Counter at the basement of the temple. The beautiful exhibition portrays through paintings, photographs and illustrations the evolution and growth of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. What is noteworthy is the inclusion of a number of panels and photographs that show the activities of the Math and Mission including the Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna-Sarada Mission alongside those of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

In the afternoon, on the same day, **Swami Suhitanandaji**, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, and **Swami Vyomanandaji** of Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi, spoke on the 'Universal Motherhood of Sri Sarada Devi'. Swami Suhitanandaji said that Sri Sarada Devi was not just the mother of a

few hundred disciples and devotees. She is the Mother of all beings, even of birds and animals. Swami Vyomanandaji narrated a few personal experiences of his own to show how even a child of five years at Jayrambati and a Westerner could readily discover divinity in the Holy Mother.

On 11 May, **Swami Satyarupanandaji** of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, in his speech on 'Sri Ramakrishna's Divine Life and Message', beautifully explained the difference between an ordinary *Sadhaka* and an *Avatara*. A *Sadhaka* or *Acharya* who through spiritual practices has attained liberation or *moksha* can help only a few, while an *Avatara* (an Incarnation of God) comes for the good of the whole world. Sri Ramakrishna was such an *Avatara* who appeared in the 19th century to lift man to a higher level of consciousness. In his speech **Swami Bhajananandaji**, Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, explained the various aspects of the Divine Incarnation and their significance for the *Sadhakas*. **Hon'ble Justice Palak Basu** of the Allahabad High Court, the Chief Guest of the evening's programme, said that his life support was the message of Sri Rama-

krishna, an ideal that he both lived and preached.

Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, presided over the function. He said that Sri Ramakrishna came to give a new depth, a new dimension, to our concept of spirituality. He showed that Vedanta should not be confined to the pages of scriptures merely; it should be practised. Man is divine and he should be worshipped. Worship should not be restricted to temples only or to the practice of a few rituals. Man, Sri Ramakrishna had stressed, should be respected and served with great humility. That was the social message of Sri Ramakrishna in this age of materialism and worldliness. Revered Swami said that material development is a must, but we should not stop there. We have to explore and cultivate still another dimension and that is spiritual. And when we do that, we shall know that we are the children of immortal Bliss. Swami Vivekananda conquered the West and astounded the Parliament of Religions in Chicago by uttering this profound Truth. The new temple that has just been inaugurated in Kishanpur will continue to remind all about this great spiritual truth.

A colourful souvenir, with temples as



the theme, was released on the occasion by Revered Maharaj. A number of mementos were presented to various people for their significant contribution to the temple project.

On 12 May, a special meeting was held to discuss 'Hundred Years of Ramakrishna Mission'. Swamis Prabhanandaji, Shashankanandaji and Atmapriyanandaji spoke at the meeting. **Swami Atmapriyanandaji**, Principal of the Degree College at Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, spoke on the 'Mission' of the Mission. **Swami Shashankanandaji** of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi, discussed the contribution of the Mission during the past hundred years. **Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj**, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math, said that the Mission has achieved a lot, particularly at the ideational level. But it has still much to do, much to accomplish. He called upon all to introspect if they were strictly following the path Swami Vivekananda preached. He laid special stress on the ideal of service as a means of individual progress and collective well-being of the society. He added that there are visible signs of despondency and frustration at many levels of society. Nevertheless, we should have

a positive attitude, for there is a light beyond the tunnel. The followers of the Ramakrishna Movement are the lights in the apparent atmosphere of gloom. He said he was very much optimistic about the future of India.

In his welcome address delivered earlier, **Swami Gokulanandaji** of the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, and also President of the Temple Dedication Committee, paid high tributes to Swami Kshamanandaji, former President of the Ashrama at Kishanpur who, before his passing away, had done much for the temple. While proposing the vote of thanks at the end of the day's programme, **Swami Atmavidananandaji**, the President of the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Kishanpur, also recalled Swami Kshamanandaji's contribution.

The programme also included different kinds of vocal and instrumental music, the unveiling of a plaque at Bauri Shiva Temple, Rajpur, in memory of the historic meeting of Swami Turiyananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, with Swami Vivekananda in 1890. The programme came to a conclusion with 'Narayana Seva' — distribution of food among the sick and the distressed — on 17 May. □

Bindu in the Upaniṣads

(Continued from page 655)

no other acquisition superior to that. That state is called Yoga. He will no more be tainted by sorrow or anguish. In that state he will be severed from all contact with pain. This Yoga should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by mental depression. One must practise the Yoga in a secluded place, free from disturbance and with a serene mind.

The Upaniṣads are a mine of strength. They ask men not to be weak and grow moody over their weakness. Yoga is a technique of controlling, conserving, preserving

and directing all mental activity through application in a higher channel. One who is well versed in this technique and has therefore a well-controlled mind is a man of God upon earth. All that man has to do to manifest this divinity is to renounce totally his ego-centric vanity and the satanic murmuring of his own impure mind in the grip of uncontrolled devilry. True redemption and success in spiritual pursuits depend on detachment from the false, and attachment to the truth. □

साधनगीता Gita for Spiritual Practice

साधनप्रकाशिकासहिता

With an Exegesis on Spiritual Practice
(Continued from the September issue)

DR. B.R. PHANI KUMAR

अथ ज्ञानयोगः-१

अनाद्यविद्याकल्पितेभ्यः उपाधिभ्यः पृथक्कृत्य असङ्गस्य आत्मनः दर्शनरूपस्य ज्ञानयोगस्य लक्षणविवक्षया श्रीभगवानुवाच—

Yoga of Knowledge-1

Wishing to expatiate on the nature of direct perception of the unattached Self by separating It from the limiting adjuncts superimposed (on It) by beginningless ignorance, the Lord said—

४५. देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥ (२.१३)

45. Just as for an embodied soul, the states of childhood, youth and oldage are in this body, even so is the state of attaining another body; a wise man is not deluded over this.

देहिनः देहवतो जीवस्य वस्तुतः विकारशून्यस्य आत्मस्वरूपस्य अस्मिन् देहे अविद्याकल्पिते यथा कौमारं कुमारभावः यौवनं तरुणावस्था जरा वृद्धावस्था तथा तथैव देहान्तरप्राप्तिः मरणानन्तरमन्यदेहस्वीकारः। धीरः आत्मज्ञानी विवेकी तत्र तादृशे स्वाभाविके विषये न मुह्यति न मोहं देहादिसद्भाताध्यासं गच्छति। देह एव जननमरणादिविकारवान् नाहं आत्मस्वरूपः इत्यात्मानात्मविवेकज्ञानोपमर्दितसकलाज्ञानत्वात्।

Though in reality an embodied soul is devoid of mutation, is of the nature of the Self, yet, just as there are, for one who has a body, the states of childhood, youth and oldage in this body which is a superimposition due to ignorance, even so is the attainment, acceptance of another body after death. A wise man, a Knower of the Self, a man of discrimination is not deluded, does not get delusion which is identification with the combination of body, etc. The reason is, all his ignorance is destroyed by Knowledge born of discrimination between the Self and the non-Self thus: 'Body alone has the mutation such as birth and death, but not I who am of the nature of the Self'. (2.13)

आत्मज्ञानावधि पूर्वोक्ता देहान्तरप्राप्तिरनिवार्या। आत्मज्ञानं च शतकोटिजन्मनामन्तेऽपि दुष्प्रापम्। अतः तत्पर्यन्तं अनादिमायाविलासकल्पितेषु देहेष्वनुवर्तमानेषु इन्द्रियविषयसंयोगजा भोगा अपि स्वभावेन अनित्या अपि मूढैः नित्या अभ्युपगम्येरन्निति तद्बुद्धिं वारयति—

Till Self-realization, attainment of another body mentioned earlier is unavoidable. Self-realization, again, is difficult to attain even after innumerable lives. Hence, till then bodies follow being superimposed (on the Self) by the play of eternal Maya. This being the state (of affairs), the pleasures born of the contact of senses with their objects may also be taken for granted by the ignorant as eternal, though, by nature they are perishable. Hence, the Lord wards off that view—

४६. मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत॥ (२.१४)

46. *O Arjuna! The contacts of senses with their objects, however, which result in cold, heat, pleasure and pain come and go and are perishable. Hence, O Bharata! endure them.*

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु मात्रा मीयन्ते ज्ञायन्ते आभिः विषयाः शब्दस्पर्शादयः इति मात्रा इन्द्रियाणि। तेषां इन्द्रियाणां स्पर्शाः तत्तद्विषयैः संयोगजाः भोगाः मात्रास्पर्शाः कौन्तेय हे अर्जुन शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः शीतमुष्णं सुखं दुःखं च विषयसंयोगजं ददति इति शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः। लोके सर्वोऽपि इन्द्रियविषयसंयोगेन खलु शीतोष्णसुखदुःखाद्यनुभूय तदनुभवज्ञानात् सुखे प्रवर्तते दुःखान्निवर्तते। ते स्पर्शाः किंस्वभावा इत्युच्यते। आगमापायिनः जनिमरणस्वभावाः अनित्याः क्षणप्रध्वंसिनः। अतः तान् अव्यवस्थितरूपान् तितिक्षस्व सहस्व भारत। तेषु प्रत्युत्पन्नेषु विक्रियारहितो भव।

The objects like sound, touch, etc. are the measures, measured or felt by standards of measure which are the senses. The contacts of these senses are the experiences born of the contacts between the senses and their respective objects. O Arjuna! they yield either cold or heat or pleasure or pain. Verily, in this world everybody experiences cold, heat, pleasure, pain, etc. through the contacts between senses and objects and based on the knowledge of that experience, tends towards pleasure and abstains from pain. It is being explained as to what the nature of those contacts is. They come and go, are of such a nature that they are born and die and are transient, that is, they perish in a moment. Therefore, O Bharata! endure, forbear them which are of indefinite nature. When they appear, be unmoved. (2.14)

असत्पदार्थेषु विक्रियाराहित्यमुपदिश्य इदानीं सत्पदार्थं विशिनष्टि—

Having instructed (Arjuna) about being unmoved by non-existent things, the Lord now distinguishes the Thing of existence—

४७. अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति। (२.१७)

47. *But, know That to be the indestructible by which all this is pervaded. None can bring about destruction of this immutable (Thing).*

अविनाशि विनाशरहितं नित्यं तु तत् आत्मतत्त्वं विद्धि निश्चिनुहि। येन आत्मना सर्वमिदं जगत् तत् व्याप्तम्। विनाशमव्ययस्य क्षयरहितस्य आत्मनः न कश्चित् शरीरादिहन्ताऽपि कर्तुमर्हति शक्नोति। अतः नित्योऽहमविनाशस्वभावोऽहमिति सदा विभावयन् युध्यस्व। निर्विकारबुद्ध्या कर्म कुरु।

Know, have a firm understanding about that Indestructible Thing, which is without destruction, which is the Nature of the Self, by which all this world is pervaded, permeated. None can bring about the destruction of the Immutable, Undecaying Self, even if he kills the body. Therefore, always think, 'I am eternal and of imperishable nature' and fight. Perform work with an unagitated mind. (2.17)

आत्मनि निर्विशेषे कल्पिताः—

Being superimposed on the immutable Self—

४८. अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत॥ (२.१८)

48. *These bodies, O Bharata! of the eternal, imperishable, immeasurable, embodied Soul have an end; therefore, fight.*

अन्तवन्तः अन्तः मरणं एषां अस्तीति अन्तवन्तः। के ते? इमे अनुभूयमानाः देहाः नित्यस्य शरीरिणः देहिनः आत्मनः उक्ताः प्रोक्ताः ज्ञानिभिः अनाशिनो नाशरहितस्य अप्रमेयस्य केनापि प्रमाणेन विषयीकर्तुमशक्यस्य। तस्मात् देहादय एव अनित्याः न त्वात्मा अविनाशिरूपत्वादिति निश्चितबुद्ध्या युध्यस्व भारत।

The objects that die are said to have an end. Which are they? They are these bodies that are experienced. They are described by the sages as belonging to the eternal Self which is

embodied and which is imperishable, without decay and immeasurable, that is, It cannot be objectified by any standard of measure. Therefore, O Bharata! fight with the firm conviction that the body, etc. alone are perishable but not the Self because of Its indestructible nature. (2.18)

आत्मा नाशरहितः यतः—

The Self is without destruction, because—

४९. न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥ (२.२०)

49. *It is not born nor does It die at any time. It is not that It will come into existence, having not already existed. This Self, being birthless, eternal, ever-lasting and ancient is not killed even when the body is killed.*

न जायते आत्मा न प्रादुर्भवति कदाचित् नित्यत्वात्। एवं न म्रियते वा कदाचित् न नाशं गच्छति नित्यत्वादेव। नित्यमेव हि वस्तु जननमरणादयो न विकुर्वन्ति। कदाचित् अयमात्मा न भूत्वा भवनमननुभूय भूयः न भविता वा पुनः भविष्यति इति न। सर्वदाऽस्त्येव नित्यत्वात्। घटादिर्हि जनेः प्राक् अभूत्वा तदनन्तरं भवति पुनः नाशानन्तरमदर्शनं गच्छति। जननमरणादिविकारसंबन्धात्। अयंत्वात्माऽविकारी। यतः अजः जननविकाररहितः। नित्यः सर्वावस्थासु सर्वकालेषु च विद्यमानः। देशकालादिपरिच्छेदरहितः। अतः शाश्वतः अयं आत्मा पुराणः पुराऽपि नवः। न हन्यते हन्यमानेऽपि शरीरे मरणविकारशून्यत्वात्।

Because the Self is eternal, It is not born, It does not come into being at any time. Similarly, It does not die at any time, does not get ruination, for that very reason of being eternal. Verily, birth, death, etc. cannot modify that thing alone which is eternal. It is not that this Self, having not existed, having not experienced existence at any time, will yet exist (in future). For, It, being eternal, always exists. As is well known, a pot, etc. does not exist before its birth and later, after its birth, exists, and again on destruction it disappears, because it is affected by modifications like birth and death. But, this Self is unchangeable, because It is not born, is devoid of the modification of birth, and It is eternal, exists in all states and at all times. It is devoid of the limitations of place, time, etc. Therefore, this Self is ever-lasting, ancient, that is, though old It is new. It is not killed even though the body is killed, because It is devoid of the modification called death. (2.20)

जीर्यमाणैः शरीरैः नित्यस्यात्मनः असङ्गत्वं प्रतिपाद्यते—

The non-attachment of the eternal Self with perishable bodies is being established—

५०. वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥ (२.२२)

50. *Just as a person leaves the worn-out clothes and puts on other new ones, even so does the embodied soul leave the worn out bodies and attain other new ones.*

वासांसि वस्त्राणि जीर्णानि विशीर्णानि विहाय त्यक्त्वा यथा येन प्रकारेण नरः लोके अपराणि अन्यानि नवानि नूतनानि वस्त्राणि गृह्णाति स्वीकरोति तथा तेनैव प्रकारेण शरीराणि जीर्णानि विहाय मरणकाले अन्यानि नवानि नूतनानि संयाति प्राप्नोति देही।

Just as, in the manner in which, a person in this world leaves, gives up worn-out, decayed (used) clothes and puts on other new clothes, even so, in that same manner, the embodied soul gives up at the time of death worn out bodies and attains other new ones. (2.22)

आत्मनः अविक्रियं पुनः प्रतिपाद्यते त्रिभिः—

The immutability of the Self is again being established in three verses—

५१. अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः॥ (२.२४)

51. *This Self is incapable of being mutilated, being burnt, being wetted and being dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, firm, immovable and permanent.*

अयमात्मा अच्छेद्यः शस्त्रादिभिः छेतुमशक्यः। निरवयवत्वात्। यद्धि सावयवं वस्तु तत् परिच्छेद्यत्वात् छिदिक्रियाकर्म भवति। नैवमात्मा यतः अवयवरहितः अपरिच्छेद्यश्च। अत एव अदाह्यः अग्निना अक्लेद्यः जलादिभिः अशोष्यश्चैव वायुना। एवं सर्वविकारशून्यत्वात् नित्यः। सर्वगतः सर्वव्यापी नित्यत्वादेव। स्थाणुः केनचिदप्यविचाल्यमानः। न हि सर्वगतं वस्तु चालयितुमन्यत् समर्थं भवति। अचलः न चलतीत्यचलः गन्तव्यदेशाभावात् सर्वत्रावस्थितत्वाच्च। अयमात्मा सनातनः चिरन्तनः।

This Self cannot be mutilated by weapons, etc. because It does not have any limbs. Only a thing with limbs becomes an object of the act of mutilation because it is divisible, but not this Self because It is without any limbs and is indivisible. For that very reason, It cannot be burnt by fire, wetted by water, etc. and cannot be dried by wind. Thus It is eternal, It is all-pervading. It is firm, that is, It cannot be moved by anything. Verily, nothing can move the all-pervading Reality. It is immovable, It does not move because It has not a place to go to and exists everywhere. This Self is permanent, ever-lasting. (2.24)

५२. अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते।

तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि॥ (२.२५)

52. *This Self is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable and immutable. Therefore, knowing It to be like this, you are not entitled to grieve.*

अव्यक्तः न व्यक्तः प्रत्यक्षादिप्रमाणैः न विषयीक्रियते इत्यव्यक्तः अयमात्मा। अचिन्त्यः प्रमाणैरनिरूप्यमाणत्वात्। स्वतः परतो वा सर्वविक्रियाभावात् अविकार्यः अयमुच्यते। तस्मात् आत्मनः नित्यत्वसत्यत्वाविकार्यत्वादिहेतोः एवं यथोक्तलक्षणं आत्मानमेनं हृदयस्थं विदित्वा ज्ञात्वा अनुशोचितुं अनुसन्तप्तुं नार्हसि न प्रभवसि।

This Self is unmanifest, because It is not objectified by standards of measure like ocular evidence, etc. It is unthinkable because It cannot be proved by standards of measure. This Self is said to be immutable because It is devoid of all types of change either inherent or external. Therefore, for the reason that the Self is eternal, real, immutable, etc. and knowing, realizing this Self seated in the heart to be such, to be of the nature thus described, you are not entitled to grieve. (2.25)

५३. देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत।

तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥ (२.३०)

53. *O Bharata! this embodied Soul in the body is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you are not entitled to grieve for any being.*

देही नित्यं सर्वकालेषु अवध्यः अयं पूर्वोक्तहेतुभ्यः सर्वस्य देहे हन्यमानेऽपि भारत। तस्मात् सर्वाणि भूतानि लोके कमप्युद्दिश्य त्वं धीरस्सन् शोचितुं शोकमनुभवितुं नार्हसि।

Though the bodies of all are killed, this Self is eternally, at all times, indestructible, O Bharata! for the reasons mentioned above. Therefore, being a wise man you are not entitled to grieve, to experience grief for anybody. (2.30)

यथोक्तलक्षणप्रत्यगात्मज्ञानप्राप्तये दृढप्रयत्नेन गुणातीतत्वमास्थेयं न तु केवलवेदशास्त्रधीतिः यतः—

For attaining the Knowledge of the Inner Self which is of the nature described above, one should, by hard practice, abide in the transcendence of attributes and not in mere study

of Vedas and Shastras, because—

५४. त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन।

निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान्॥ (२.४५)

54. *The Vedas deal with the subjects of three attributes. O Arjuna! be above the three attributes, the dualities, be always established in sattva, be without acquisition and preservation and absorbed in the Self.*

त्रैगुण्यविषयाः त्रैगुण्यं त्रिगुणपरिच्छेद्यं सत्त्वरजस्तमोगुणैरेव प्रकाश्यमानं संसारविषयः अर्थः यैः प्रकाश्यते ते त्रैगुण्यविषयाः वेदाः अपि। अतः त्वं निस्त्रैगुण्यो निर्गतं त्रैगुण्यं यस्मात् स निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवं अर्जुन। त्रिगुणातीतो भवेत्यर्थः। निर्द्वन्द्वः निर्गतो सुखदुःखादिद्वन्द्वभावः यस्मात् स निर्द्वन्द्वो विक्रियारहितो भव। एवं नित्यसत्त्वस्थो नित्यं सत्त्वगुणाश्रितो भव। रजस्तमोगुणाभ्यां मुक्तो भव। तावेव हि रजस्तमोगुणौ पुरुषं विसिन्वतः रशनेव पशुम्। सत्त्वगुणस्तु बन्धशैथिल्यात् नैर्मल्यातिशयात् ज्ञानवैशद्याच्च प्रत्यगात्मप्रकाशकः। अतः सत्त्वगुणनिष्ठस्यैव गुणातीतत्वमाशु सिध्यतीति विशिष्यते। अतः त्वं आध्यात्मसाधनयुक्तस्सन् निरन्तरं सत्त्वरूपो भव। निर्योगक्षेमः अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्तिः योगः। प्राप्तस्य रक्षणं क्षेमः। तौ योगक्षेमौ निर्गतौ यस्मात् स निर्योगक्षेमो भव। किमपि प्राप्तुं रक्षितुं च नैव प्रयतस्व। आत्मवान् आत्मनिष्ठो भव।

Even the Vedas are concerned with the three attributes, that is, by them is revealed the subject of this world which is limited by, revealed only by the three attributes: sattva, rajas and tamas. Therefore, O Arjuna! be above, transcend the three attributes, that is, be one from whom the subject of the three attributes has vanished. Be non-dual, that is, be one from whom have vanished the dual feelings like happiness, misery, etc., be without any modification. Similarly, always be established in sattva, that is, be free from rajas and tamas. Verily, these two attributes, rajas and tamas, bind a being as a rope binds an animal. But, the sattva attribute reveals the Inner Self, because it is weak to bind, pre-eminent in purity and perspicuous in Knowledge. Therefore, it is being distinguished that transcendence of the attributes is easily accomplished by one who is established in sattva attribute. Hence, being always endowed with spiritual practice, be of the nature of sattva. Be free from acquisition, which is attainment of an unattained thing, and from preservation, which is protection of a thing attained; be one from whom have vanished acquisition and preservation; never at all try to attain or protect anything. Be absorbed, established in the Self. (2.45)

द्वन्द्वैरविचाल्यमानबुद्धिरेव आत्मज्ञानार्ह इति प्रतिष्ठितप्रज्ञस्य लक्षणमाह—

He alone, whose intellect is unmoved by dualities, is fit for Self-knowledge; hence, the Lord mentions the qualities of one whose wisdom is steady—

५५. दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते॥ (२.५६)

55. *That sage who is unagitated in misery, free from desire amidst pleasures, devoid of attachment, fear and anger, is said to be of steady wisdom.*

दुःखेषु आधिभौतिकाधिदैविकाध्यात्मिकेषु अनुद्विग्नमनाः नोद्विजते न विचाल्यते मनो यस्य सः अनुद्विग्नमनाः अविक्रिय इत्यर्थः। एवमेव सुखेषु प्राप्तेषु इह पूर्वस्मिन् वा जन्मनि कृतसुकृतफलरूपेषु विगतस्पृहः विगता अपगता स्पृहा यस्य सः विगतस्पृहः विगतहर्षभावः। सुखदुःखे अनियताव्यवस्थितरूपे अनित्ये नित्यात्मप्रतिष्ठं विद्वरिष्ठं न विकुरुतः। तादृशः वीतरागभयक्रोधः वीताः विगताः रागभयक्रोधाः रागः इष्टे सङ्गः भयं क्रोधः इष्टाप्राप्तौ जायमानो मनोविकारः यस्मात् स वीतरागभयक्रोधः। अतः स्थितधीः स्थिता स्थिरा प्रतिष्ठिता धीः बुद्धिः यस्य स स्थितधीः मुनिरुच्यते।

He, whose mind is not agitated, is not disturbed in misery brought about by agencies

material, divine, and individual, is of unagitated mind, is unchangeable. Similarly, amidst pleasures met with as the result of good deeds done in this life or in a past life, he is devoid of desire and the feeling of happiness. Happiness and misery which are unreal, inconstant and indefinite do not modify a person who is established in the Real Self and who is the best among the Knowers of the Self. Such a one in whom attachment which is identification with a pleasurable thing, fear, and anger which is a mental modification rising on account of non-attainment of the desired thing, are absent, is, therefore, of steady, unwavering and established intellect and is called a sage. (2.56)

५६. यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम्।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥ (२.५७)

56. *His intellect is steady who is free from affection (everywhere) and who does not rejoice or hate on getting whatever is good or evil.*

यः ज्ञानी प्राप्तब्रह्मात्मैक्यभावः सर्वत्र देहादिदृश्यप्रपञ्चे अनभिस्नेहः अभिस्नेहवर्जितः रागरहितः इत्येतत्। यः ईदृशः तत्तत् शुभाशुभं शुभमशुभं वा इष्टमनिष्टं वा प्राप्य नाभिनन्दति शुभं प्राप्य न नन्दति न हृष्यति अशुभं प्राप्य न द्वेष्टि न निन्दति तस्य प्रज्ञा आत्मविषया बुद्धिः प्रतिष्ठिता।

The Knower of the Self, who has attained to the state of oneness of the soul and Brahman, is devoid of affection for or attachment towards anything in the external world such as body, etc. Such a one who neither rejoices on getting a desired thing, nor hates on getting evil, that is, a disagreeable thing, has his wisdom, pertaining to the Self, steady. (2.57)

(to be continued)

Ego: Ripe and Unripe

(Continued from page 652)

potentially divine' and that the goal is to manifest its divinity in everyday life. This is a very important antidote for the evils of the ego. What are the divine qualities? Truthfulness, non-hurting of others, pure love and affection, compassion, humility, selfless service to beings, etc. God is imminent in every being and if we strive hard to develop pure selfless love towards everybody without discrimination of caste, creed, sex, religion or nationality, that is the best spiritual

discipline. Then nobody will remain a stranger, the other. This will result in the formation of a universal family of God. Then the ego which was so long identifying itself with a small family of parents, brothers and sisters, will begin to identify itself with the universal family of God—God's children, God's devotees. Thus, the ego expands to become a divine being. This is the best solution to destroy the evils of the bloated and contracted forms of ego. □

Hear only of God and talk only of Him. Shun that place where His Name is not uttered as you would a cremation ground.

—Swami Brahmananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 82

News and Reports

Visit of Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishana Order, to the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon

When Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, arrived at Portland airport at noon on 9 May 1998 with Swami Vimalatmananda, his attendant, they were greeted by an enthusiastic group of devotees. One of the devotees offered the Swami flowers, another had put up a large banner which read, 'Welcome to Portland, Swami Atmasthananda'. Swami Shantarupananda, Minister of the Vedanta Society of Portland, introduced each devotee as he or she greeted Swami Atmasthanandaji and offered pranams. The whole group then proceeded to the Portland temple, at which site lunch was served to all. In the evening a reception was held in honor of Swami Atmasthanandaji. Mr. Stuart Bush, President of the Society, introduced the Swami, telling all that the Swami had done over the years, stressing his service to Swami Virajanandaji (who became the sixth President of the Ramakrishna Order) while he was at Shyamala Tal. Swami then talked about his memories and answered a few questions put to him by the devotees.

On 10 May, Swami Atmasthanandaji spoke to a full house on 'God as Mother' telling many incidents in the Holy Mother's life and inspiring everyone with his explanation of the Motherhood of God. His talk was especially appropriate to Americans as 'Mother's Day' was being celebrated. After the lecture everyone was served lunch. In the evening, Terrance Hohner, a devotee in the Portland Center, presented a slide show entitled 'Inspired Talks of Swami Vivekananda', which the Swami enjoyed much, and regarding it he made some helpful suggestions. Dinner was served to all the devotees.

11 May was the Buddha Purnima, the thrice blessed day. Swami Atmasthanandaji joined the devotees in the shrine while Swami Shantarupananda performed a special worship on this holy occasion. Everyone present imbibed the deep spiritual atmosphere during worship and meditation. Swami Atmasthanandaji met briefly with the devotees in the foyer after the worship and answered a few more questions. The devotees who had prepared lunch served everyone.

That afternoon, a group went on a driving trip to the National Scenic Area of the Columbia River Gorge. They took the scenic route passing numerous high waterfalls and then stopped at the Crown Point which overlooks the mighty river and the magnificent gorge. Then they pro-

ceeded to Multnomah Falls, the fifth highest waterfall in the U.S. When Swami saw the falls tumbling over the cliffs he remarked that it reminded him of the description of Ganga flowing through Shiva's matted locks. The hillsides were covered with rhododendrons in full bloom. They reminded the Swami of his days at Mayavati. On the way home driving along the Columbia River, Swami called the river 'magnificent' and said with enthusiasm, 'Hail, Columbia!'

It was evening, and Swami Atmasthanandaji came to the Chapel expecting to start a guided meditation right away. He didn't know that Swami Shantarupananda in conjunction with the devotees had planned a surprise party to celebrate his 80th birthday. First a beautiful garland was placed around his neck by Swami Shantarupananda. He promptly took it off and put it on Swami Shantarupananda. Then a large decorated cake on which was written in ochre letters, 'Swami Atmasthananda Happy 80th birthday' was presented to him by Vera Edwards, the oldest member of the Society. Everyone sang 'Happy Birthday to You' and then he was told by Swami Shantarupananda to make a wish and blow out the candles. He was totally surprised. After a short pause, he said, 'What shall I wish? I only wish you all be in peace and all be happy, and I wish for peace in the world.' He blew out all the candles at once and everyone cheered. Then many of the devotees gave him presents which he opened one by one. He said, 'My meditation must be very successful because look at all this!' Two of his presents were boxes of chocolates which he graciously shared with the devotees. It was a joyous occasion.

After this, he became indrawn. He invited the devotees to sit on the floor in front of him. The chapel was darkened and he began the guided meditation, first explaining the location of the *kundalini* and then demonstrating the correct sitting posture. Then everyone closed their eyes and sat quietly. He first said to watch the mind, then to place it on the Chosen Ideal and try to keep it there. After a half hour of peaceful silence, he quietly chanted '*Chidanandarupah Shivo'ham*', 'I am the Infinite, the Absolute. I am Pure Consciousness. I am Atman, the Supreme Self.' and ended the meditation. One devotee then sang a *bhajan*. The program ended with Swami Atmasthanandaji telling that Swami Virajanandaji used to meditate and pray 18 hours a day, but he could

only do 14! After Swami left, the devotees were served dinner.

On **12 May**, Swami attended noon worship. In the afternoon he was taken to see the Vedanta Retreat in Scappoose which is on 120 acres of a wooded hillside overlooking the Columbia River. On the property are trails leading to shrines of different religions and of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda. Swami Atmasthanandaji spent time at the main temple on the property. He offered flowers at the altar and to the statue of Swami Vivekananda. This statue was made by Malvina Hoffman who saw Swami Vivekananda when she was a little girl. He then had tea and snacks in the Brahmananda Hall before the group returned to

Portland in the evening.

That evening, after vespers, Swami Atmasthanandaji went to Holy Mother's House which is maintained for women devotees. The women had gathered for a pot luck dinner. After offering flowers at the shrine, Swami met with these women, answering questions and talking about Swami Virajanandaji.

The Swami left Portland in the afternoon of Wednesday, **13 May**, for Seattle, Washington. At the airport he remarked, 'I had a nice peaceful time and I was happy I could devote time to prayer and meditation.' It was with regret that we parted with him. He had given so much while he was here and been a real inspiration to all. □

Celebration of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission at Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York observed the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission with two special events: a Special Service at the Chapel of the Center in New York City at 11:00 a.m. on 7 June 1998, and a Special Service at the Chapel of the Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida, at 8 p.m. on 10 June. The theme of both services was 'The Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission: The Service of God in All'. Special guest for both events was **Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission**. Also participating were religious leaders of different faiths, interfaith leaders and well-known musical artists.

Special Service at

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of NY

At 11:00 a.m. on **7 June** there was the Special Service at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. Among the distinguished participants were **Rabbi Joseph H. Gelberman**, President of The New Seminary of New York, and **Father Mychal Judge**, OFM, St. Francis of Assisi Church and Monastery of New York. The Chapel of the Center was filled to overflowing with nearly 300 members and friends of the Center who came from near and far to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Ramakrishna Order's Mission of Service. The altar of the Chapel had been beautifully decorated with flowers for the occasion and the spiritual atmosphere was enhanced by the organ music performed by Guest Organist, **Raul Sunico**. The Service began with a procession of the Swamis and other distinguished participants who approached the altar of the Chapel while the music of the organ filled the Chapel. The Choir of the Center then performed Vedic Chanting, followed by a special musical rendition of Swami Vivekananda's

poem, 'The Living God'.

Swami Adiswarananda opened the Service with a prayer and welcomed all to this Special Service. The distinguished participants then addressed the congregation on the theme of the program: *The Service of God in All*. Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji gave an illuminating talk on 'The Ideal of Service in the Ramakrishna Order,' emphasizing the Order's unique view of service to all as a veritable form of worship. Rabbi Joseph H. Gelberman then spoke on 'The Ideal of Service in the Teachings of Judaism,' and also made appreciative references to the Ramakrishna Order and its tradition of service to humanity. Father Mychal Judge spoke on 'The Ideal of Service in the Teachings of Christ,' and described his many spiritually rewarding experiences. Each of the participants spoke eloquently on the ideal of service to God in man as one of the most important common themes in all religious traditions. They praised the Ramakrishna Mission for its 100 years of leadership in providing service to the needy in India and abroad, through the Order's many hospitals, clinics, mobile dispensaries, orphanages, schools, colleges, vocational training institutions, and relief projects.

In his concluding remarks, Swami Adiswarananda spoke of the special significance of the ideal of service in the Ramakrishna Order — 'For the good of the many, for the happiness of the many'. Swami concluded his remarks by quoting the words of Swami Vivekananda: 'They alone live who live for others.'

Swami Adiswarananda then thanked the participants and all present, and concluded the service with a prayer to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda for the peace, happiness and well-being of all. The devotees and friends of the Center thanked Swami



Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, addressing the congregation: Special Service in the Chapel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York



*Distinguished Participants and the congregation
Swami Adiswarananda, Father Mychal Judge, OFM, St. Francis of Assisi Church and Monastery of N.Y.,
Rabbi Joseph H. Gelberman, President of the New Seminary of New York,
Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*



Brooklyn Historical Society: Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Richard Heaps, Director, and Swami Adiswarananda. On the table is an original Brooklyn Standard Union Newspaper dated 27.2.1895 describing Swami Vivekananda's lecture given at the Society



*Brooklyn Historical Society
Judith Giuriceo, Curator of Exhibitions, Richard Heaps,
Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Swami Adiswarananda*

Adiswarananda for this very meaningful and inspiring Special Service.

Pilgrimage to the Brooklyn Historical Society

On 8 June, Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji and Swami Adiswarananda visited the Brooklyn Historical Society (originally called the Long Island Historical Society), *the only surviving building in New York in which Swami Vivekananda actually lectured in the year 1895*. The Society continues to this day to be one of New York's important cultural resources, containing a museum and extensive archives related to the history and life of Brooklyn. This special visit was arranged in advance by Swami Adiswarananda, through the kindness of **Mr. Richard Heaps**, Director of the Society and **Ms. Judith Giuriceo**, Curator of Exhibitions. Upon arriving, the Swamis were received by Mr. Heaps and Ms. Giuriceo and given a tour of this beautiful and historic New York Landmark building, and shown the actual spot where Swami Vivekananda gave his lecture. The visit was made especially meaningful when, for the benefit of the Swamis, the hosts brought out an original *Brooklyn Standard Union* newspaper of 27 February 1895 showing the article describing Swami Vivekananda's lecture on 'India's Gift to the World,' given in this very building. The Swamis expressed their gratitude to their hosts for the kind hospitality extended to them during this visit. The Director told the Swamis that he was pleased that the Brooklyn Historical Society had

played a part in the history of Swami Vivekananda, and he felt honored that he was able to receive such distinguished visitors.

Special Service at

Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida

From 9 June to 11 June, accompanied by Swami Adiswarananda, Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji visited the Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida. Soon after reaching the Center, both Swamis met with the Religion Editor of *The St. Petersburg Times*, **Ms. Waveney Ann Moore**, who came to the Center to conduct an interview with the Swamis on the subject of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. Ms. Moore also attended the Special Service on the following evening. On 13 June, *The St. Petersburg Times*, one of the eminent daily newspapers of the United States of America, devoted the front page of its Religion Section to an article on the Centenary, with several photographs taken at the Special Service. It quoted **Ms. Kathleen Scargill**, a long-time member of the Center, as remarking: 'I think Swami Atmasthananda, when he was pointing and saying, "You are God and you are God," the point he was trying to make is if you are seeing God in every person, seeing God's smiling face when you are doing your service towards others, then who you are serving is God. That made such an impact on me. If we could just remember that in our daily activity, then how could you be angry with someone? How could you be violent with someone? How could you be upset with



*Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj addressing the congregation:
Special Service in the Chapel of Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida*

someone?’

On **10 June** at 8 p.m., the Chapel of the Center was filled far beyond its capacity for the Special Service held in commemoration of the Centenary. Musical artists of the renowned **Florida Orchestra** performed while the distinguished participants entered and made their way to the altar of the Chapel where a picture of Sri Ramakrishna was beautifully decorated with flowers. The President of the Center welcomed the distinguished visitors and then introduced the Center’s Spiritual Advisor, Swami Adiswarananda, who gave the opening prayer and welcomed the special guest speakers and the congregation.

Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji was the first speaker of the evening and gave an inspiring talk on ‘The Ramakrishna Mission and Its Ideal of Service of God in All’. The Swami presented a brief history of the Mission’s work of service and spoke on the underlying spiritual purpose of this selfless work for the poor and the needy. **Dr. H. Roy Kaplan** then spoke on the vision and activities of the National Conference, one of America’s foremost organizations dedicated to helping to bring about understanding and cooperation among people of all faiths and traditions. This was followed by a musical offering in honor of the occasion, performed by the well-known artists of The Florida Orchestra.

Christine O’Brien, then gave a talk on the various kinds of service activities carried on by the Quaker Society of Friends and its members.

She also spoke of the cordial friendship between the Quaker Society and the Vedanta Center over the years.

Swami Adiswarananda then made his concluding remarks. Swami thanked the Revered Vice-President and the other distinguished speakers for their participation in this Special Service, and expressed his gratitude to the members and friends of the Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg for their enthusiastic response. The evening concluded with a reception in the garden of the Center at which refreshments were served to the entire congregation. All present expressed their deep appreciation for this special event organized by the Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg.

In its issue of 19 June 1998, *India Abroad* (the oldest Indian newspaper in North America and the largest outside India) published an article about the Centenary events held in New York and Florida, and said: ‘Inspired by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886) and his foremost disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the Ramakrishna Mission remains at the foremost in India of such charitable work as operating hospitals, clinics, mobile dispensaries, orphanages, schools, colleges and vocational training institutions and conducting relief work.... Since its founding in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda, with headquarters at Belur Math near Calcutta, the Order has pioneered service for the poor and needy.’ □

New York City Centennial Celebration ‘New York Harbor Festival’ — 20 June 1998

The year 1998 marks the 100th Anniversary of the consolidation of the five boroughs (Brooklyn, Manhattan, Bronx, Queens and Staten Island) into the City of New York. To celebrate the occasion, the authorities of the City officially designated 19–21 June 1998 as ‘New York City Centennial Weekend’. The grand, city-wide celebration began with an Opening Ceremony on the steps of City Hall, presided over by **Rudolph W. Giuliani**, Mayor of the City of New York. The three-day ‘Centennial Weekend’ that followed included a huge variety of educational, cultural, religious and entertaining events in all parts of the City. On Sunday, 21 June, hundreds of churches and houses of worship all over the City joined together in a tribute to the City’s Centennial by ringing their bells for ten minutes.

A major event of the New York City Centennial Celebration was held on 20 June: **The New York Harbor Festival**. For the occasion, **Swami Adiswarananda** was invited by the organizers of the Centennial Celebration to join with religious

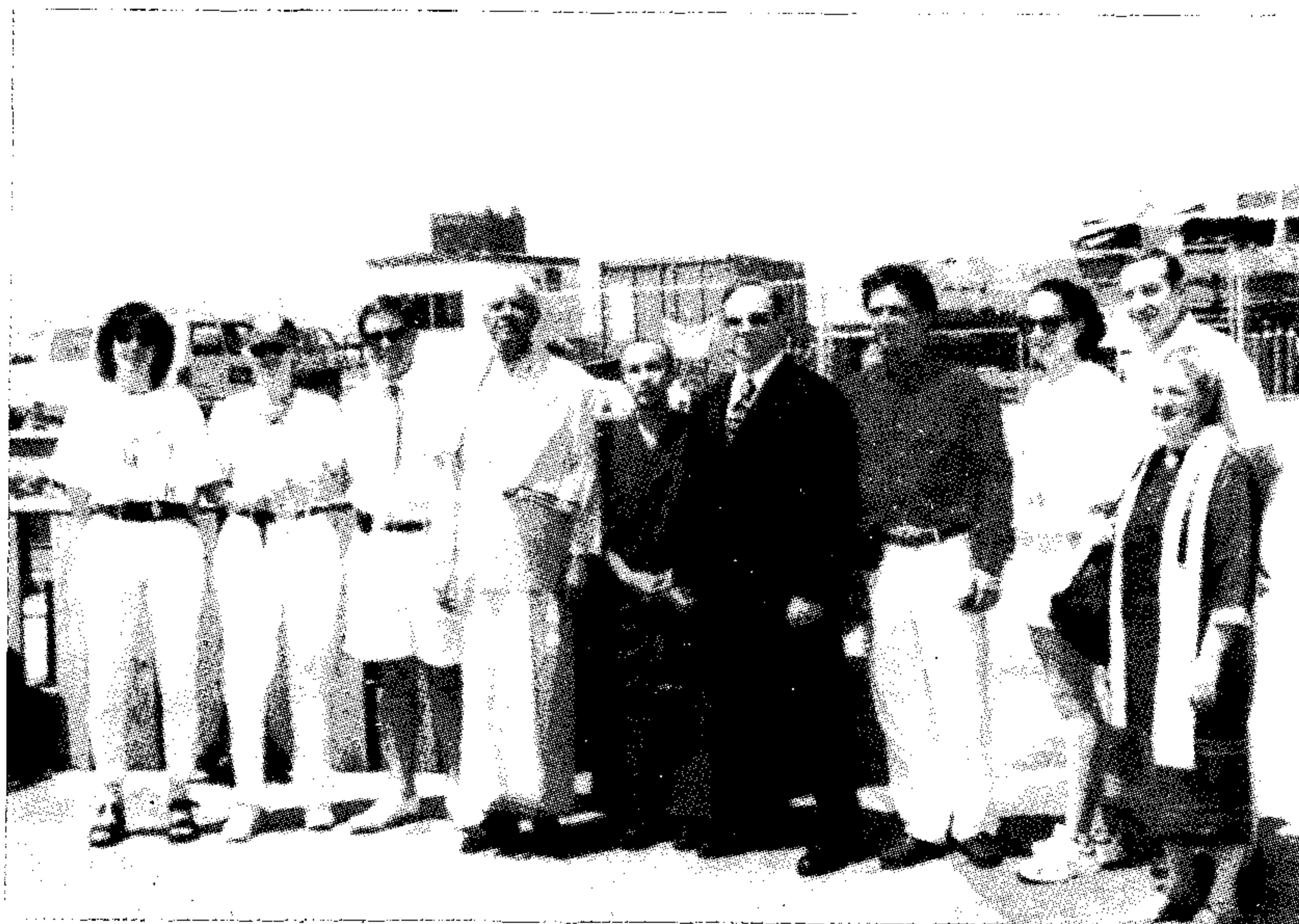
leaders of other major religions to be on board the 110-foot United States Coast Guard Patrol Boat, ‘Adak’, anchored in the Hudson River in the vicinity of lower Manhattan, easily visible from the shore, for a traditional ceremony: **THE BLESSING OF THE FLEET**. The religious leaders participating in the event were: **Swami Adiswarananda**, Spiritual Leader, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, **Ven. Lobsang Chodak**, The Tibetan Monastery of New York, **Father Francis Gasparik, OFM Cap.**, Saint John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church and Monastery of New York, **Rabbi Seth Livingston**, Brooklyn, New York, and **Lynn Wetreich**, Interfaith Minister, The New Seminary of New York.

Also taking part in the ceremony were the officers and crew of the United States Coast Guard and official representatives of various agencies of the City: New York Centennial Committee, New York Harbor Foundation, Hudson River Park Conservancy, New York Harbor Sailing Foundation and New York Harbor Festival



'New York Harbor Festival' Blessing of the Fleet: 20 June 1998

Michael Fortenbaugh, Director, New York Harbor Foundation, Swami Adiswarananda, Rabbi Seth Livingston, Brooklyn, New York, Lynn Wetreich, The New Seminary of New York, Father Francis Gasperik, OFM Cap., St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church and Monastery of N.Y., Ven. Lobsang Chodak, Tibetan Monastery of New York



Blessing of the Fleet:

Swami Adiswarananda, Religious Leaders and Officials of the Festival

Committee.

Many people, including representatives of all branches of the media (to cover in reports and broadcasts), gathered on shore to watch as the vessels in the Harbor paraded between the Coast Guard boat and the Manhattan shore, to receive the blessings of the religious leaders for a safe, peaceful and prosperous boating season. Taking part in the parade was a most diverse and colorful assortment of work and pleasure boats including sailboats, powerboats, kayaks, canoes, tugboats, ferries, sightseeing boats, and cruise ships.

The event proved to be both festive and inspiring, as the religious leaders signalled their blessings, while the boats paraded and the sounds of horns and whistles filled the air. The religious leaders each gave their blessings

according to their respective religious tradition. Swami Adiswarananda prayed for peace, happiness and well being of all, uttering the Vedic prayer: *May there be peace in heaven. May there be peace in the sky. May there be peace on earth. May there be peace in the water. May there be peace in the plants. May there be peace in the trees. May there be peace in the gods. May there be peace in Brahman. May there be peace in all. Peace, peace, peace.* A City official, who was present at the ceremony, later remarked that she felt especially inspired by this prayer, a prayer that she would always cherish.

People on board the various boats waved and acknowledged their appreciation for the blessings they received. It was notable, indeed wonderful, to witness the unity, harmony, and spirit of fellowship among all the people and the representatives of religious traditions. □

Centenary Celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission

The Mauritius Centre organized a function with a variety of programmes from 5 to 11 July. The public meeting held on the inaugural day was addressed by Mr. A.V. Chettiar, Vice-President of Mauritius, Mr. M.L. Tripathi, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, and Swami Gautamanandaji.

Dedication of the Ramakrishna Temple at Malda

The newly-built temple and the marble image of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna were consecrated by Revered Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, on 29 April 1998, the auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya. Altogether 113 monks and *brahmacharins* of the Ramakrishna Order participated.

On 28 April, *vastu-yajna* was performed in the morning and a public meeting was held in the evening to commemorate the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. Revered Swami Smaranandaji, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Swami Prabhanandaji, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math, spoke on the occasion, and they were introduced by Swami Mangalananda, President of the Ramakrishna Math, Malda.

On 29 April, Swami Gahananandaji dedicated the new temple and the marble image of Sri Ramakrishna. *Usha-kirtan*, Vedic chanting, and temple *parikrama* were part of the programme. A colourful procession of monks, *brahmacharins*, eminent citizens, school students and devotees was taken out through the thoroughfares of the town. Distribution of *prasad* to about 15,000 devotees, of wearing apparel among the needy, of writing material and clothes among students from underprivileged sections of society added colour to the programme. Kum. Anusree Kir-

tania who secured the highest marks in Madhyamik Pariksha (1997) was awarded the 'Jyotirmoy Mitra Memorial Medal'. The class performers in recitation, elocution and drawing competitions were suitably honoured. In the public meeting held in the evening, Swami Purnatmanandaji Maharaj, Editor of *Udbodhan*, and Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu discussed the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada and Swamiji. The meeting was presided over by Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj.

On 30 April, a well-attended *Bhakta-sammelan* was held. Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, and Swamis Vagishanandaji and Purnatmanandaji were on the dais. There was a very lively question-answer session. A cultural programme by Shibpur Prafulla Tirtha and Sri Nirmal Sil & party were upto the expectation of the audience. One of the attractions was a drama-performance 'Biley Vivekananda' by the children of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Sishu Sadan, Malda.

Installation of Swami Vivekananda's Statue

A 9½ ft. bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda, installed near Nambala tank in Rajahmundry by our Rajahmundry Math and the local Citizens' Committee, was unveiled by Justice Sri Umesh Chandra Banerjee, Chief Justice, Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh, on 11 July in the presence of a large number of local people, including several noted persons of the town.

E-Mail Address

Some of our centres have e-mail facility: The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chennai, ashrama@md3.vsnl.net.in, and Ramakrishna Math, Kankurgachhi, yogodyan@cal.vsnl.net.in. The e-mail address of our Japan Centre has been changed to vedanta@bekkoame.ne.jp. □